

Voyages II



VISIONS OF AN ENDLESS SEA,
 OF STARS DOTTING THE HORIZON
 YESTERDAY IS GONE
 AND TOMORROW AWAITS
 GO FORTH BOLDLY
 EVEN THE STARS ARE ATTAINABLE IF WE
 SET OUR SAILS.



A STAR TREK - CLIPPERCON COMMITTEE ZINE

EDITOR.....BEVERLY VOLKER

PUBLISHER.....MARION MC CHESNEY

Typing.....Sandy Zier
 Renee Volker
 Nancy Kippax

Layout.....Beverly Volker

Cover.....Gina Godwin

Publication Date; 1st Printing: July, 1987

Price: \$10.00

July, 1987, by CLIPPERCON ASSOCIATES for the artists and authors. No reprints or reproductions without the written permission of the Editor. This is an amateur fan publication of a non-profit enterprise and is not intended to infringe on the rights of Paramount Studios, Norway Productions, NBC, or any other holders of STAR TREK copyrights.



Personal Log...

I'd like to take a long sea voyage -- or star voyage. The first is within the realm of possibility. The second is available only in dreams -- or stories.

VOYAGES II will take you to the stars. In a giant starship, we will visit distant worlds as our ancestors visited distant lands in the old sailing ships. And through the written word, we hope that we can make the future come alive even as history has recorded our past.

The city of Baltimore has long been associated with the sea. Its harbor has welcomed vessels from all over the world since its establishment back in the early days of our country's independence. At Fort McHenry, Baltimore patriots held off the attacking British fleet and the ensuing battle inspired poet Francis Scott Key, being held on a ship offshore, to pen what would later become our national anthem, The Star Spangled Banner. Baltimore's close proximity to New York made it a second Ellis Island, as it received immigrants during the last decade of the eighteen-hundreds. Today's modernized and ever-expanding harbor offers a variety of activities for tourists and residents to enjoy and observe. It combines history with the present.

As we move toward the 21st Century, native Baltimoreans strive to keep this vital part of our city growing with the times. By the era of Kirk and Spock, perhaps Baltimore will welcome aliens from other worlds as we welcomed those alien to America. It is not inconceivable that Baltimore will become an important spaceport just as it has been a seaport.

It is fitting, therefore, that VOYAGES be produced in such a city. Our background prepares us for the kind of attitude which anticipates the adventure of exploration... by sea or stars.

Although VOYAGES is a ClipperCon zine, this issue includes the talents of fans from other parts of the country. We'd like to make Lynn Syck, Maggie Manlove and D.A. Martin honorary Baltimoreans, as well as Gina Godwin, a ClipperCon Committee member who doesn't actually reside in our city or its surrounding area.

VOYAGES II introduces the writing talents of Gina and Cheryl Bobbitt, and we welcome them aboard in that capacity. Gina's done much artwork, and Cheryl's calligraphy is well known.

I'd like to mention here that VOYAGES I is sold out. Marion may consider reprinting. We were pleased that it received a Surak Award nomination. That's a very nice thing for a first issue, and while most of us who worked on V-I are veterans of the zine world, the nomination told us that many of you read and enjoyed our latest effort. We thank you for your vote of confidence.

I don't plan to edit any more issues of VOYAGES. It was never meant to be an ongoing zine, but rather a one-or-two issue run. Both Marion and I have a lot of other obligations and we just don't have the time to continue this, too. I have a personal project which I'm eager to start, and it will take priority over any Trek writing or editing for a while. The exception will be the special Christmas issue of CONTACT which is well underway and will be out in time for holiday buying.

Now, sit back and read and take a long voyage to the stars.

May the wind be at your back....

Bew

Beverly Volker

PUBLISHER
Marion McChesney
P.O. Box 668
Edgewood, MD 21040

EDITOR
Beverly J. Volker
5657 Utrecht Road
Baltimore, MD 21206



★ contents ★

NO PLACE LIKE HOME	
story by Nancy Kippax.....	1
MOONLIGHTING	
poetry by Sandra Zier.....	20
MANDY	
story & art by Steve Wilson.....	21
WHALESONG	
vignette by Sandra Zier.....	46
POST TRANSCENDANCE	
story by Martha J. Bonds, art by Jan Davies.....	47
IF THIS BE DREAMS	
poetry by Lynn Syck.....	54
WHEN PIGS FLY	
vignette by Cheryl Bobbitt.....	55
STARS	
poetry by Mary Mills.....	57
THE NEW GENERATION	
poetry by Beverly Volker.....	58
THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS	
story by Deborah Cummins, art by Maggie Manlove.....	59
SOMEDAY WE SHALL MEET AGAIN	
vignette & art by Gina Godwin.....	111
THOUGHTS	
poetry by Nancy Mann.....	114
RETURN TO DRAGON ISLAND	
story by Beverly Volker.....	119
ENTERPRISE	
poetry by D. A. Martin.....	140
THE VOYAGE THE HELL HOME	
play by Steve Wilson & Scott Grossman, art by Steve Wilson & Jan Davies.....	141



No Place



Like Home



by Nancy Kippax

Spock leaned back in his seat and surveyed his fellow passengers for the fortieth time since their departure. There wasn't a pointed ear or tentacle among them; they were all Terran. What else could one expect on an Earth airliner to Des Moines, Iowa? No one stared, although a few had glanced at him curiously, yet Spock still felt distinctly ill at ease. And he knew it was just beginning.

His companion noted his discomfort and grinned sympathetically.

"Are you sorry you agreed to this?"

Spock feigned innocence. "Captain, I... "

"C'mon, Spock, relax. You've been on Earth before," Kirk chided him.

"I attended a galactic scientific seminar in the Eastern hemisphere, with members from every race. Not exactly a 'typical American community.' "

"You've served with humans for years now - we shouldn't hold any more surprises." Kirk watched the eyebrow climb upward, hesitated, then went on eagerly, "Well, I still think you'll enjoy it." A dull weariness suddenly replaced the twinkle in his eyes, and Spock was sharply reminded of why he was here.

"Captain, you should try to get some rest before we land."

Kirk scowled. "I've been doing nothing but resting since we left the Enterprise. If you're going to mother-hen me through this entire vacation, you can just -- " He broke off sheepishly and smiled again. "I'm all right, Spock. Really."

The Vulcan sighed patiently at Kirk's show of charm. The Captain could be most truculent when he chose.

"Besides," Kirk went on, "we're almost there. You can see the lights of the city -- look."

Spock leaned across to peer out the tiny window. Once again he was ensnared by an insidious timidity.

"Your mother is expecting us?"

"I've told you, she'll be at the airport." Kirk's enthusiasm failed to communicate itself to the Vulcan.

"And you informed her that I would be accompanying you?"

"Of course. She was delighted."

Spock nodded thoughtfully, not fully convinced but determining not to pursue it. It was enough that Jim was pleased and content, and Spock's apprehension melted away under the conviction that he was doing the logically correct thing.

☆☆☆

They stepped off the plane and crossed the floor to a crowded waiting room. All around them people were embracing, clutching, pumping hands, talking enthusiastically. Although Spock had served on a starship with humans, the precision of military regime was no preparation for undisciplined civilians.

After a slight hesitation, Kirk spied his mother. He grabbed Spock's arm. "There she is. Come on."

"Jim!" She hurried toward them, greeting her son with an affectionate hug.

Kirk laughed. "I thought that flight would take forever."

"Well, I suppose when you're used to warp drive, our humble means of transportation must resemble a pack-horse." She pulled away as she spoke and turned to the Vulcan.

"And you must be Spock. Jim's mentioned you so often I feel as if I know you. We're so pleased you could finally accept our hospitality." She made no move to touch him and her tone was level and cultured, yet her open friendliness and sincerity was just right.

"I am honored, Mrs. Kirk," Spock replied formally, inclining his head. He found himself studying her with open curiosity. She was a small woman, but Jim looked like her, he decided. It wasn't so much the features, although there were similarities in their noses and the shape of their eyes, but something about her carriage and manner was so totally familiar that it made an instant impression on Spock. Her hair was several shades darker than her son's, but her eyes were the same soft hazel. And right now they were twinkling in the same way his did when he was delighted about something.

"Well, come on. We have quite a drive ahead of us yet tonight." She laced one arm through Jim's, who patted her fondly. Then, with almost a command gesture, she offered her other arm to Spock. He accepted it solemnly and they made their way out of the terminal.

Jim was breathing heavily but still excited when they reached the car. "Hey, old Sugar Bear's still running, huh?" he asked.

Spock looked at him over his mother's head. "Sugar Bear?"

"That's our name for the car," Mrs. Kirk explained, as her son unlocked the doors. "It was Sam's idea, really..." Her voice trailed off as she saw Spock reach out a hand to steady her son, and Jim wave him off. The subtle motion went unacknowledged.

"Yes," she went on, covering the awkward moment. "She's just been overhauled again, and Callin's clocked her at 220, although what I'd do with that kind of speed is beyond me."

"Callin's a fool," Kirk muttered. "She's going to kill herself one of these days."

"But you can't find a better mechanic in Sand Falls."

"Precisely how far is Sand Falls, Mrs. Kirk?"

She could hear the concern in the Vulcan's voice. "We'll be there in an hour, Spock. It's about one hundred miles."

Spock nodded as he and Kirk slipped in next to Kirk's mother. The sooner they reached Jim's home, the better. If necessary, he would force his Captain to bed. This day had been too long, too tiring.

She drove competently, making small talk as she steered them across the super-highway and onto narrower county roads.

"Jim, your Aunt Mavis and Helena are coming for lunch tomorrow." Kirk groaned; his mother chuckled softly. "Now, you should have known she'd be over as soon as she heard you were coming home."

"And, of course, you had to tell her I was coming." He turned to Spock. "You'll love my Aunt Mavis, Spock -- she sort of reminds you of Harry Mudd's wife, Stella."

"Who?" his mother asked, as Spock choked.

"Oh, just someone we met once," Kirk replied. Realizing she was being teased, his mother smiled. Then she went on soberly.

"You know, at the risk of sounding like a typical mother, Jim, you've lost too much weight." To lighten it, she looked at Spock, appraising. "And you look like you could do with some Iowa cooking, too. Don't they feed you men on that ship?"

"As a matter of fact," Jim began, "our Chief Medical Officer always has me on a diet."

"Is that how he got his nickname -- 'Bones', isn't it?"

Jim laughed as even Spock suppressed a smile. "Touche, Mother. And perhaps you ought to know -- Spock's a vegetarian."

She was not to be deterred. "That may prove a bit more difficult, but I think I can manage. Ardie Hampton's a vegetarian, or so he says, and he weighs about 250 pounds."

Spock expected to hear Kirk laugh and when he didn't, he looked closely at his Captain in the gloom of the car's interior. Jim had fallen asleep, exhaustion claiming him before they reached his home. Spock was both relieved that Kirk was resting and anxious about what his mother might think. He need not have worried about the latter.

The car hit a sudden jolt, tossing Kirk's head against Spock's shoulder. Kirk's mother appeared intent on her driving; surreptitiously, Spock rested his arm across the top of the seat, pulling Jim into a more comfortable position.

After a moment of silence, Kirk's mother addressed Spock in a conversational tone. "Jim tells me this is your first visit to the midwest of America, Spock."

"That is correct, Mrs. Kirk. I hope my visit does not prove to be inconvenient."

"Under no circumstances," she countered firmly, then she smiled. "But, please, let's dispense with the 'Mrs. Kirk.' It sounds too stiff -- and I don't like to stand on formality." She grinned impishly, a familiar expression. "My given name is Elizabeth. Why don't you just call me that?"

"Very well... Elizabeth."



At last they reached the house. The low, long building was elegantly modern. Spock regretted the dark; he would be eager to see the house and grounds in daylight. There were no other buildings for some distance.

As Elizabeth climbed the steps to the porch, Spock woke Kirk and helped him out of the car. Kirk laughed off the incident, making a joke of falling asleep on them. His mother was not fooled.

"Well, you may have had your forty winks, but your friend and I haven't, so I suggest we retire until morning." She led them down a hallway. "Jim, you know where your room is. I've put Spock in Sam's old room, right next to yours. There's fresh linen in the bathrooms and clean clothes in your closets. Your luggage should be here tomorrow morning." They stopped in front of the indicated rooms.

Kirk grabbed her around the waist and pulled her to him. "Have I told you yet that I love you?"

"No, you haven't. Nor that you're glad to be home, or that you want to stay, or a dozen other niceties. But save them for tomorrow, dear. I'm fatigued."

Kirk shook his head at Spock. "She's hopeless."

"There are definite family characteristics," Spock countered lightly. Then, "Good night, Jim... Elizabeth."



Spock awoke to unfamiliar noises, smells and surroundings. Somewhere outside he heard birds chirping and a motor running. The house smelled of food - bread, he decided, or pastry. He opened his eyes, appreciating the Spartan simplicity of the decor. The Kirk home was not fussy or overadorned. His room was cheerful, efficient and masculine. The furnishings were massive wood and metal, probably very old, and decorations were minimal. Spock decided he felt comfortable here.

They had traveled in their uniforms; Spock debated a few moments before he selected one of the soft jumpsuits provided for him in his closet. It was a stretch fabric which fit him adequately.

There were noises coming from another part of the house and Spock followed his instincts to the kitchen. Assuming he was the last one up, he was surprised to find Elizabeth Kirk alone. He hesitated, glancing back the length of the hall, debating whether or not he should check on his Captain.

"Good morning, Spock." Sensing his uncertainty, she added, "Jim's not up yet. Would you like something to eat? We're not very formal here, so you'll have to help me out."

Spock found his worry evaporating under her soft voice. "Thank you," he responded, accepting a glass of juice. "Whatever is convenient will be adequate." He felt uncommonly at a loss for words, acutely aware of his unfamiliarity with her and her lifestyle. The fact that this was Jim's mother only added to his desire to be accepted. Illogically, he wished Jim were here, now, a familiar point on which to focus.

Elizabeth sat a plate on the table and told him to sit. Filling two cups with coffee, she took a seat opposite him. She cupped her chin in her hand and studied him.

"Spock, what's wrong with my son?"

Her direct approach both disarmed and attracted Spock. He was reminded of Amanda, and he reflected that the two women were not unlike. Each had a perverse layer of firmness under their genteel exteriors, and Spock felt Jim had been wrong not to tell his mother of his condition. There was, after all, no reason for secrecy.

As he hesitated, Elizabeth went on. "Oh, I know, you're probably thinking it's not your place to say anything. But he's sick, isn't he? I already know that much. He's always an early riser, and that ploy he used last night didn't fool me. What is it, Spock? Has he... has he come home... to die?"

Her fear compelled him to speak. "No... no, not that, Elizabeth. Jim *was* ill. He almost died." He said the words naturally, emotionless, as the memory returned to haunt him. "A disease... similar to mononucleosis, but more deadly. The crew picked up the infection on Canopa 12. The Captain was one of the last to succumb and was affected more seriously than the others. He spent thirty four days in Sickbay -- twenty of them before Dr. McCoy pronounced him cured. The infection has exacted much of him, and that was the reason for this leave. We felt..." Spock paused, concerned he may have admitted too much of his own reaction. "Dr. McCoy knew he would not rest properly on the ship."

She was silent, thoughtful, and Spock sought to reassure. "He is in no danger now, but he must not overtax himself and he must work to rebuild his strength."

"And that's no easy task, with Jim," she said finally. She met Spock's eyes. "Thank you for telling me, Spock. I don't think Jim need know we discussed it."

"That may be best," he concurred.

"You know," she confided, "Jim's always been like that. He's a very compassionate person, yet he has never wanted anyone to make a fuss over him. He likes to pretend he has no weaknesses. I can respect that, even if I don't understand it." She tilted her head. "And I'm afraid you're going to have to be careful, or he'll suspect the *real* reason you've come along."

Her perceptiveness startled him; one eyebrow shot up before he could stop it. Then he almost smiled. "I believe he already does."

McCoy's words filtered back to him, the argument which had persuaded him to accompany Kirk to Earth. Despite the fact that he was reluctant to let his Captain out of his sight after nearly having lost him, Spock had hesitated about accepting Kirk's offer of hospitality at his home in Iowa. Spock would always be an alien on Earth, even though it comprised a full half of his heritage. There had always been that need to deny anything human about himself, to reject the logical fact that it was also within himself, this quality he called 'humanity.' He had never visited his mother's home, never met his relatives still there, had always been uneasy and uncomfortable around most emotional humans. He knew that in Iowa he would be an alien, a stranger in a strange land indeed, and had it not been for Jim's weakness he would never have consented to the vacation. But McCoy had been right -- the Captain needed someone to keep an eye on him, be with him, someone who understood.

"Mrs Kirk!" The voice came from outside. Excusing herself, she went to the door and admitted a large, beefy man with an armful of baggage. Spock followed her to see if he could be of any assistance.

"Thank you, Tuck. Just put them down anywhere." As he was staring, openly curious, at the Vulcan behind her, she added, "Martin Tuck, this is Mr. Spock, Jim's First Officer."

"Pleased to meet you." Tuck grinned.

Spock nodded. "Mr. Tuck."

The man seemed to consider, then, "Are you Andorian or something?"

"Vulcan."

"Oh, yeah... Vulcan." Tuck nodded as if that explained everything. "Will you be staying long?" he asked cheerfully.

"Approximately fourteen days," Spock responded.

He seemed to translate that. "Oh... a couple of weeks. Well, hope you enjoy yourself." He turned to Elizabeth. "Mrs. Kirk, where's Jim?"

"He's not -- "

"Who wants to know?" Kirk interjected from behind them. Spock and Elizabeth turned in surprise, but Kirk was focused on Tuck. "Mart! How are you! How are the kids?"

The two men shook hands enthusiastically. Tuck beamed. "Great, Jim, just great. Belinda got married last year, and Junio's in college now."

"Time flies," Kirk's tone was wry. Then he drew Spock toward him. "Have you met Spock?"

"Sure did. He told me you're staying a couple of weeks. I brought your luggage..." Tuck interrupted himself. "You're just in time for the fair this weekend." He turned to Spock. "You'll like that. Make sure Jim takes you on over, okay?"

"Well, certainly." Kirk answered for Spock. "We wouldn't miss it."

Tuck nodded. "I've got to be going. Nice seeing you again, Jim. Nice meeting you, Mr. Spock. Drop over if you get a chance." He nodded to Jim's mother. "Mrs. Kirk..."

"Good bye, Tuck. Thanks again." Elizabeth Kirk sighed deeply and turned to her son as the man backed out. "Well, I suppose your arrival will be all over town before noon -- *and* the fact that there's a... an *Andorian* staying here."

"What?" Kirk was confused.

"Never mind. Come -- have some breakfast," she ordered.

"I'll put these away," Spock offered, lifting the luggage. Not only did he want something to do, but he sensed Elizabeth's desire to be alone with her son for a little while. Her grateful smile told him he'd been correct.

He took a long time putting away his and Kirk's gear and clothing. He unpacked his own first, and exchanged the borrowed suit for one of his own. Then he hesitated before taking the liberty of entering Kirk's room.

The room was not surprising, but it was interesting. Books, real old-fashioned hardback books, lined one wall, protected behind a glass door. Curious, Spock scanned the contents, finding many familiar classics, some

contemporary juvenile authors, textbooks on philosophy, history and astronomy. Spock's fingers itched to peruse some more closely, but he realized that now was not the time.

The furniture was similar to that in his own room, but the walls were more personally adorned. Large pictures, plaques, diplomas were hung with no thought to symmetry, yet all blended, like everything in the room, into a coherent whole. One especially stunning piece of art was over the bed, a gigantic representation of the solar flares on Adlebaron. As Spock was admiring it, he heard the door open.

"Lovely, isn't it?" Kirk came in and sat on the bed in front of Spock. "I bought it when I was fifteen with my own money. I saw it in a window downtown and would think of nothing else until I owned it."

"It was worth whatever price you paid."

Kirk's thoughts seemed far away. "Yes, although I suspect I got it for much less than it was worth. Mr. Wallace -- he ran the studio -- was a good friend of my father's. He seemed... inordinately pleased to find a teenage boy in Sand Falls who appreciated art." He chuckled wryly. "He never guessed that my interest was not strictly artistic."

"Even then... you desired star travel," Spock said softly.

"Oh, yes." Kirk was sober. "By then, I'd been out -- several times. I was on Tarsus the summer before I bought the picture. The Academy Prep School here in Iowa sent us out to the colonies regularly every summer. Although that incident on Tarsus almost grounded me -- my parents nearly pulled me out of the school."

Spock was silent, thinking how different the roads which had led them into Starfleet had been. Spock had not decided, not been sure, until he was almost twenty, where he would devote his energies and scientific studies. When he chose the space service, it had been a cataclysmic disaster, an eruption of ice and pain from his father. He had been made to feel that he dishonored his family. Yet, even as Jim Kirk, he had always known where his future was.

The stars had offered him a place, and they had offered a place to Kirk, and the wistful young boy who had once inhabited this room had been replaced by the brash young captain of the Enterprise, so special that none could replace him, and Spock experienced a sudden wave of tenderness toward the man in front of him.

The intensity of emotion was too much. Lightly, he changed the subject. "I took the liberty of unpacking for you."

"No need for you to do that.. McCoy said I should be careful, but I'm not an invalid."

"I only meant to be of assistance. I would have done it whether or not you were ill."

"Then I thank you, Mr.. Spock. Your assistance is greatly appreciated." Kirk touched his hand with a gesture of a moment shared by two men who truly understood each other.

Spock relaxed, then recalled what he had meant to ask. "Jim, may I have your permission to borrow some of your books while we're here?"

Kirk's eyes twinkled with the old merriment. "A book is made for sharing. I'd be delighted, Spock."



Mavis Kirk and her daughter, Helena, came for lunch. Kirk and Spock were outside at the back of the house when Kirk spotted her car coming down the road.

"Uh-oh. Aunt Mavis," he groaned.

"Sir?"

"She's the curse of Sand Falls -- disagrees with everybody about everything. She's never been out of this town in her life and doesn't think farther than her own back fence."

"I see. A pity."

"She married my Uncle Ralph when he was fifty-two. She was twenty-five at the time. They had Helena within the year, and of course Uncle Ralph spoiled the child terribly. My uncle had been one of Starfleet's merchant shipping captains. He retired when he was fifty and returned to Sand Falls. When Helena was seven, Uncle Ralph drowned in a boating accident. Of course, that never stopped Mavis from considering us her family, and she's been plaguing us all my life. I don't remember Uncle Ralph -- I was only four or five when he died."

Spock's mathematical brain was doing some quick computations. "There was quite an age gap between your father and his brother, then," he assumed.

"My...?" Kirk looked confused, then he nodded. "Oh, I see! No, my Uncle Ralph was my *father's uncle*. Technically, my Great-Uncle, I suppose."

Spock was becoming quite bewildered, but he thought he understood the general pattern of the story.

"Well, come on," Kirk said, gesturing toward the house. "There's no getting out of it now, so we may as well get it over with. Just remember, be polite and pay no attention to anything she might say," he cautioned.

"What of the daughter?"

"Helena's all right, I guess." Jim was thoughtful as they strolled to the house. "Last I heard she's still not married -- sort of a junior Mavis, but not so aggressive. I've been hearing about her 'delicate health' since I was a kid, but I don't think there's anything physically wrong with her."

At least there wasn't when we were little. She used to beat me up all the time."

"She... beat you up?" Spock repeated numbly.

"Well, I wasn't allowed to hit back -- she was 'delicate', remember?" Kirk sighed as they reached the porch, wiped the sweat off his lip and formed an innocuous smile.

"Captain, perhaps I should..."

"No, you don't. Come *on*."

They entered the cool interior of the house together, and found the two women in the main room with Kirk's mother. All three looked up as the men entered. The older woman, obviously Mavis Kirk, glanced at Spock, startled, then turned to her nephew and came toward him.

"Jim! So good to see you again." She embraced him.

"How are you, Aunt Mavis? Hello, Helena," Kirk greeted them. Spock stood at Kirk's side, wondering again at the lapse of sanity which had led him here.

"Mavis," Jim's mother put in smoothly, coming to Spock's side, "this is our guest, Mister Spock. He's Jim's second-in-command on the Enterprise."

"Ah, yes, the Vulcan. Martin Tuck said he met you this morning. How do you like Sand Falls, Mr. Spock?" Mavis asked.

"Actually, Mrs. Kirk, I've seen very little of -- "

"Oh, Jim!" Mavis exclaimed, losing interest in Spock's answer. "Listen, darling, I spoke to Mabel Cunningham this morning, and we want you to speak at the Rotary Luncheon on Friday. I told Mabel you wouldn't mind."

"Mavis! Jim's home to relax," Elizabeth chastized her.

Mavis would not be deterred. "Well, I know, but it would be such a treat, Elizabeth. It's not every day that we get a Starship Captain in Sand Falls."

"What am I supposed to talk about, Aunt Mavis?" Kirk asked, sealing his doom.

"Why, our space program, I suppose. I don't know. Whatever it is you *do* out there."

"Oh. Well -- "

"Mother," Helena entered the conversation at last, "perhaps Mr. Spock would come along, also. Wouldn't *that* be interesting?"

"Yes." Jim seized the invitation with a fiendish joy. "Now there's an idea. In fact, why don't you just invite Spock -- he's an excellent public speaker. And," he added innocently, "how often do you get a *Vulcan* in Sand Falls?"

"Captain, I..." Spock's voice was dangerously low. He didn't realize Kirk was teasing until he noticed Elizabeth trying to hide a smile.

The humor was lost on Mavis. "No. We want *both* of you. It's at one o'clock in the Town Hall." She settled into a chair.

They were all taking seats, so Spock sat also, finding himself next to Helena. She was a large, straight girl with prominent teeth, not unattractive but rather ordinary. She turned and smiled at him.

"What is your field, Mr. Spock?"

"I am a scientist," he replied.

"How exciting. I work in a doctor's office, so we have something in common."

Spock failed to see any connection, but he decided not to pursue it. Helena went on.

"I imagine your lives are very exciting. Have you met many aliens? I mean..." She flustered, realizing her blunder.

"Exciting!" Her mother scoffed, coming to her aid. "Well, I suppose, but seriously, Jim Kirk, when are you going to give up all this swashbuckling stuff and settle down and raise a family? You're not getting any younger, you know."

"Aunt Mavis, my career with Starfleet -- " Kirk began.

"-- leaves much to be desired. Oh, I know. You'll be just like your Uncle Ralph. Marry too late, have your babies too late, and not live to enjoy them. You should take heed from his experience."

"Yes, Aunt Mavis," Kirk said, giving up.

"This is the *real* world, Jim," she went on, warming to her subject. "All that flitting around the galaxy, playing spaceman -- well, you always *were* a strange child. You should get a *life*. Spock -- " she turned her gaze on him, "do you have a family? A wife?"

As Spock hesitated, Kirk answered for him. "No, Spock's a swashbuckler like me."

"Pity. Although I could tell you were a bachelor. You have that look."

Elizabeth reprieved them, announcing from the doorway that lunch was served.

The meal seemed interminably long. Spock managed to concentrate on his food and avoid the swirl of conversation around him for part of the time. Mavis and Helena did most of the talking anyway, and many of the people and topics discussed were unfamiliar to the Vulcan.

Finally, they were finished and Spock was beginning to wonder if they intended to spend the entire afternoon when Mavis mentioned something about a golf date.

"Oh, Aunt Mavis, must you go so soon?" Kirk asked her with all the charm Spock had ever heard him use. She positively preened.

"Yes, I'm afraid so, dear. But we'll see you again before you leave."

Helena stopped between her mother and Kirk. "I'm having a small party on Sunday afternoon -- sort of an after-the-fair gathering. A lot of your old friends will be there. Won't you and Spock join us?"

"I think we can make it. I'll let you know definitely by Friday," Kirk promised her.

"Good. We'll see you. Aunt Elizabeth -- " she turned to Kirk's mother. "Thank you for everything, and we'll be in touch."

Elizabeth kissed her cheek and bade them both farewell. As she followed them out to their vehicle, Kirk and Spock watched from the doorway.

Suddenly, Kirk sagged limply against the wall, and immediate concern mobilized Spock. He took Kirk's arm firmly.

"You'd better rest for a while, Captain."

"I'm all right -- just dizzy for a moment." He laughed shortly. "My aunt's enough to make one dizzy, I guess."

"Nevertheless, I believe a respite from activity is indicated," Spock told him sternly, steering him toward his room.

"All right," Kirk conceded, straightening, "but not here. Let's go outside."

Spock had no choice but to give him his way. Kirk walked a good fifty yards from the house before he finally dropped down under a large shade tree. Spock sat beside him, frowning.

"Now what's wrong?" Kirk asked patiently.

"I believe the object of this leave is for you to rest. So far, on our first day, you have made plans for three more. Parties, luncheons, fairs..."

"... are *fun*, Mr. Spock. Tell me -- what do you think of it all, so far?"

Spock was thoughtful. "It is not precisely what I expected," he admitted.

"And how did you expect it to be?" Kirk seemed intent on his answer.

"Everyone seems... most cordial, even your Aunt Mavis, in her way." They exchanged a look of amusement. Spock went on. "I feel... comfortable here."

"I knew you would," Kirk mumbled smugly, shutting his eyes. "The galaxy moves on, but Sand Falls never changes. There's a peacefulness here that's quite refreshing... in small doses."

Spock made no reply. Gradually, Kirk drifted into sleep.



That evening, the three of them went into the main section of town. They were greeted warmly by many people, and Spock began to perceive the influence of the Kirk family in Sand Falls. Their home had indicated prosperity, but there was power here, too. Elizabeth Kirk was regarded with high esteem, and her son was looked on with respect and admiration.

Yet even more surprising was the ease with which they included Spock. It was done not out of politeness or an aspiration for status, but from genuine, honest friendliness, and Spock felt warmed by it. Whatever he had expected to find in Sand Falls, he had not been prepared for this.

The next few days were quiet; Elizabeth was kept busy with prior appointments and meetings, while Jim and Spock did little of anything. Spock was encouraged by the return of his captain's strength, and on Thursday, when Jim decided they would go out to the pool, Spock found no cause for alarm.

Then Jenny Steinberg called, and Kirk quickly invited her and Roger to join them. Roger invited Michele, Thom, and Paul, and before Spock could figure it all out, there were twelve people of various ages at the Kirk pool for a swim party. He watched in confusion as the guests arrived and were introduced, nearly all with the standard question: 'Where's your suit?' He explained patiently, again and again, that he did not desire to swim. At last, while no one was looking, he slipped back to the house and went into his room with a textbook on astronomy which he had borrowed that morning.

It didn't take long for Kirk to ferret him out. He appeared, dripping wet, in the doorway.

"What are you doing in here?"

"I am reading."

"Come join the party. Jenny's fixing lunch for us. I ordered a salad for you."

"Perhaps later, Jim."

"Michele was asking for you. I think she likes those pointed ears," Kirk teased.

Spock tried to recall which one was Michele, failed and gave up. "I do not wish to --" he began.

"Sure you do," Kirk injected firmly. "If you don't want to swim, at least come out and sit by the pool."

Seeing no way to avoid it save an open confrontation, Spock acquiesced. "Very well," he said reluctantly. Jim beamed and led the way outside.

The party was in high gear when they returned. Thom and Andy had brought instruments and were strumming and singing noisily on one side of the pool. A middle-aged matron, Larena, was being thrown in the pool by a younger woman with long blond hair.

Jenny Steinberg came out of the clubhouse with a tray of drinks. She smiled at Spock. "Well, look who's returned. Jim, may I borrow your friend for a while? I could use some help. Do you mind, Spock?"

Kirk shrugged, immediately preoccupied with the blond who'd been involved in the dunking. Spock followed Jenny, grateful for the excuse to get away from the noisy crowd.

"What may I do to assist you?"

"Oh, put those things in bowls -- " she indicated a pile on the sideboard, "and tell me something."

"I beg your pardon?"

"What's wrong with Jim? He looks terrible."

"Mrs. Steinberg -- " he began, reluctant to be cross-examined by a stranger.

"Look, I've known Jim Kirk since we were both six years old." She laughed softly. "We even went steady once, when we were thirteen. He's a good friend of mine and of Roger's. He's my daughter's godfather, for heaven's sake. I wouldn't ask if I wasn't concerned."

"Then shouldn't you consult him, and not me?" he asked, meeting her eyes.

"Would he tell me?" she countered.

"Perhaps," Spock considered.

She looked thoughtful. "Then I shall." After a moment, she added, "Should I worry?"

He responded to her anxiety; his expression softened. "No."

"Jenny -- " A large black man -- Spock believed his name was Tad -- came into the clubhouse. "We need some salt out here."

"On the shelf," she directed. Spock noticed the ease with which she worked, her familiarity with the arrangement of the clubhouse. She was obviously a frequent guest.

Tad smiled at Spock. "Jim tells me you work with computers, Spock. Perhaps you could help me out."

"If your problem concerns a computer, I may be able to assist," Spock replied, trying to appear casual, while excitement coursed through him.

"Sure does." Tad grimaced. "I work down at Standard Marketing. We have a C-350 setup for payroll and inventory. The whole system crashed yesterday, and the factory can't get a serviceman here before Monday. We've tried everything, but we can't get the thing operational. Do you think you could take a look at it?"

Spock considered a micro-second. "The C-350 is a primary system, basic hardware. It may be possible to effect repairs unless a major replacement is necessary. I could run a series of checks."

"That's great!" Tad beamed. "You'll make a lot of people happy if we can get our payroll out on time. Is tonight all right? I could pick you up after dinner."

Already Spock's mind was moving ahead to the evening. "That will be highly satisfactory," he agreed.

"Thanks a lot!" Tad took the salt and left. Spock turned to Jenny.

"Is there something more I can do?" he asked hopefully.

"No, go on outside and enjoy yourself. I'm just about through here. Oh," she added, "take that tray with you, please."

Spock wandered out, finding the crowd quieter now; almost everyone was eating, talking in small groups. Jim was sitting with two men and the blond girl. Wishing to avoid the crowd, Spock selected a chair near an attractive black girl who looked as though she, too, had avoided the pool. She wore a swimsuit, but it was dry.

"Care for something to drink?" she offered.

"No, thank you, Miss..."

"Kit. Kit Halstead," she prompted softly.

Feeling as though he was required to say more, Spock queried, "You are not using the pool today?"

"No, I don't -- " she broke off, shrugging, then smiled gently. "No. I don't swim."

Now Spock felt he had overstepped his boundaries by prying. Obviously he did not yet understand the intricacies of small talk. Abashed, he stared out over the lawn.

"We all must appear terribly dull to you, Commander Spock," Kit said at length.

Surprised by the formality of his title, Spock looked back at her, pausing to consider her statement. "On the contrary, Miss Halstead. I am... fascinated."

She dismissed the polite answer. "Oh, I'm sure. Once Ben -- that's my brother -- left Sand Falls for the colonies, he never found it quite the same here. He hasn't been back in five years now. Not that I blame him."

"Each place in the universe is distinct into itself," Spock told her gravely.

"And what of your home, Vulcan. Is it very different?"

"In some ways," he equivocated, thinking of the polite formality, the ordered activities of his planet. Yet his mother had managed to retain some of her heritage in their home, and Spock was about to remark that, when he

suddenly realized that probably no one here knew he was half Terran. Curiously, he didn't want to admit it. He sensed it would somehow change things.

"Has Jim shown you the museum in town? It has some excellent exhibits of our planet's history, if you're interested in that."

Spock responded with curiosity. "I was unaware of it. I believe I would gain a certain perspective from such an institution."

"I'd be happy to take you there myself, if you'd like," she offered, almost shyly.

"One day next week, perhaps," he encouraged, surprised to find himself pleased with the prospect.

"Is Thursday acceptable?"

"Thursday is fine."

Just then, someone called her name. With a parting smile, Kit excused herself and got up from the chair. Spock experienced a momentary shock of sudden comprehension as she walked purposefully across the grass.

The reason Kit Halstead had been unable to swim today, or any other day, was because one of her legs was an excellently crafted artificial limb. The signs were quite faint, but unmistakable to the trained Vulcan eye. He watched her with new respect.

"Enjoying yourself?"

Spock turned to meet the twinkle in his Captain's eyes. Kirk sank down heavily on the chair Kit had just vacated. Spock studied him carefully for signs of fatigue, found none, and relaxed.

Spock illogically wanted to chatter: *Jenny Steinberg is worried about you, and I'm going to check out a computer tonight and go to a museum with Kit Halstead on Thursday --* but he said merely, "They are an interesting group of people, Captain."

Kirk's smile warmed. "I was telling Thom and Ludia about your lyrette. You brought it along, didn't you?" At Spock's nod, he went on. "Well, would you consider bringing it out? I think everyone would enjoy it if you played." The request was low-keyed, respectful, and Spock did not feel pushed.

"If you think so..." he ventured.

"Good! I'll tell them." As Spock headed back to the house, he could hear Kirk's voice calling the group together.



The playing was quite successful. After awhile, the other instruments joined in, and Spock found himself at the center of the group. Elizabeth Kirk returned home and joined them under the trees. As dusk began to settle,

the guests began drifting off, and Spock stood at Jim's side during the leave takings. It had been an extremely satisfying day, and he marveled at the ease with which he had managed to blend in.

After dinner, Spock accompanied Tad to his office and experienced another type of pleasure, that of getting his hands and brain engaged in computer work. He found the difficulty with little trouble and managed to rig a replacement part which would suffice until a new one was ordered. Then Tad allowed him access to their data banks and program stores and he spent the remainder of the evening suggesting improvements to the existing system, while Tad copiously took notes. He returned home in the early morning hours, found everyone asleep and went, wearily satisfied, to his bed.

The next day was the Rotary Luncheon. Spock thought of every possible excuse he could muster, but in the end his Captain sadistically propelled him along.

Mavis Kirk was there, along with Jim's mother, and numerous older men and women. It was the most 'formal' affair Spock had seen in Sand Falls, and even it had a certain informality, which he found hard to get used to. Before their speech, Jim introduced him to several important people of the town -- the mayor, media personnel, several doctors and clergymen.

Spock had not prepared what he was to say, but Jim spoke first and led into Spock's speech with carefully structured remarks, so that between the two of them, they might have been addressing an alien delegation on the advantages of the Federation and Starfleet protection.

Past the initial hurdle of uncertainty, Spock felt himself responding naturally, and later taking an active part in the question and answer period which followed. Perhaps part of his pleasure was derived from his observation of Kirk. His Captain was clearly enjoying himself, putting aside the weight of command he always carried. Additionally, Spock was impressed by how smoothly he and Kirk functioned as a team, even away from the ship. The Vulcan had to admit that he was enjoying this interlude, illogical though that emotion seemed.

Sand Falls had its share of provincial citizens, Spock acknowledged, yet there were also many whom he had met that were not very different from the humans in Starfleet.

Perhaps, he reflected, this was part of the answer to the enigma of Terran humanity. Although Vulcans espoused the concept of infinite diversity, Vulcan philosophy, temperament, psychology, was amazingly rigid and one-dimensional. There was very little room for individual personality or thought. Yet Humans *were* diverse, more nobly diverse than Vulcan could imagine.

"Pensive, Spock? Is something troubling you?" Kirk took his elbow, propelled him gently through the cord of people.

"Why, no, Captain. I am just considering the philosophy of human psychology..."

Kirk smiled softly. "Of course." His eyes were speculative. "I have a hunch you're not sorry you came along on this errand of mercy of yours."

"Captain, I never -- "

At that moment, they were interrupted by someone from NEWSFAX, and they turned their collective attention to his questions. By the time they were left alone again, the subject had been relegated to the background, yet each knew it would come up again, simply because they knew each other so well.

☆☆☆

The weekend brought a fresh whirlwind of activity, encompassing the fair, Helena's party, a concert, and many new experiences for a Vulcan.

Sand Falls prided itself on its authentic 'old-fashioned' summer fair, and Kirk was quick to point out that it was not typical entertainment in the basically cosmopolitan city. Nevertheless, Spock ate cotton candy, peanuts in the shell, ice with flavoring poured on it, and a slice of real apple pie -- all things he had only read about in children's stories or experienced as imitations. He watched the children of Sand Falls climb astride wooden horses which circled a track to the beat of a cheerful mechanical tune, watched the men and women play games of chance against a programmed computer which, illogically, allowed them scant chance of success, watched his captain with a little girl -- Jenny and Roger Steinberg's daughter -- enjoy the festivities with an enthusiasm which matched that of the child.

Bialy, who was seven years old, was a beautiful child with large brown eyes and straight brown hair which hung to her shoulders. Spock watched, fascinated, as Kirk won a large stuffed animal for her -- with the help of a certain companion who had a way with computers, as he put her on the rides, as he used his exceptional charm assured to melt feminine hearts of any age. And as he watched, Spock wondered briefly, with a vague unease, if Kirk wasn't missing out on a part of life he would have treasured, in order to fulfill other needs within himself.

On Sunday, they attended Helena's party and in the evening went to a concert in town. It was another full and busy day, and by the time the pair arrived home, Kirk was thoroughly exhausted. He allowed Spock to pour him a glass of brandy, and they sat together in Kirk's room, reliving the highlights of the weekend. Spock was eager to discuss his impressions.

"Why, Spock, I think you're enjoying yourself."

"The fair -- it was quaint, Jim. The opportunity was there for me to observe, first-hand, that which I have only encountered in literature. To participate was an added bonus."

Kirk smiled, pleased. "I'm glad. I wasn't sure you'd be comfortable."

Spock tilted his head to one side, quizzical. "Am I becoming... nationalized?"

"If so, then just in the nicest way. Spock..." Kirk's voice grew sober. "I know I haven't really said it, and maybe I don't have to, but I'm glad you're here with me. I'm glad we're sharing this good time. We seem to share so many bad times. I know why you came along, and perhaps it was

selfish of me, but I didn't care what the reason. I wanted your companionship. And I only hoped you'd have a pleasant time, too."

Truth called for truth. Something which had been gnawing at the edges of Spock's thoughts for several days came forward.

"I would not have believed this journey would be such a satisfying time. I am learning that Terrans are not as I had been raised to believe. Or, perhaps, that I am more tolerant than most Vulcans. Jim..." Still, he hesitated, then plunged on. "Jim, I have... family here on Earth, also. Although my mother and her parents left Earth when she was only a small child, there are aunts and uncles, cousins. My mother corresponded with them frequently."

"I didn't know that. Where do they live?"

"A region known as Massachusetts."

Kirk nodded. "That's not far from here. Several hours by air."

"I never had any desire to meet them," Spock admitted slowly. "Yet, now..."

"You want to go." Kirk nodded, a strange shine to his eyes. "I think that's... good, Spock. I think it's wise to know all of your heritage."

"Will you..." Spock cleared his throat. "Will you accompany me?"

"I would be honored." Kirk accepted what he knew was a sincere tribute. "We can leave tomorrow. Spend a day or two, if you'd like. Or more. Do you have names, addresses?" Kirk was already thinking ahead, eager, then he slowed down. "Wait. This is your show."

"No, please, go on. Your enthusiasm will keep me from changing my mind," Spock admitted. A tiny smile softened his mouth. It was Jim, and Sand Falls, which had prompted this new acceptance of his Terran heritage, which made him curious about those whom his mother called kin. Perhaps it was a new beginning, a new facet of his identity which he would discover in Massachusetts. Whatever he found, he knew he would not regret his decision to go.

Kirk leaned forward, laying a hand on the Vulcan's shoulder, his fingers gently squeezing, giving support.

"Just give them a chance, Spock."

Spock nodded. With Kirk at his side, all things were possible. And home would always be wherever this man was. Vulcan, Earth, or Enterprise, there was, truly, no place like home.



MOONLIGHTING



Red alert is sounding on the ship
Your First Officer is more than qualified
He will call if he needs you
For I have to do my job as well.

*-- What am I, a doctor or a moon
shuttle conductor?*



We've come to a world
To save men from a proven killer;
A life form unlike any we've ever seen
And you command me to heal it.

-- But I'm a doctor, not a bricklayer.

Klingons have contaminated
The world of people I once called friends.
Now only my touch is allowed
To the wife of their deceased leader.

-- But I'm a doctor, not an escalator.



A doomsday machine
Threatens all worlds in its path
We struggle against the ultimate weapon
To revive a dying ship.

-- But I'm a doctor, not a mechanic.



An act of nature
Landed us in a world opposite our own
Desperation pulled us together
Fighting time as well as our counterparts.

-- But I'm a doctor, not an engineer.

We have experienced death... and rebirth
After facing a vengeful foe
We've found the means to save our world
All we need now is time... for time heals all wounds.

*-- And remember, I'm a friend, not just
a doctor.*



Sandy Zier

MANDY



story & art by Steve Wilson

Since the days of her childhood, Saavik had not slept easily. On her birthplanet, sleep had been a luxury -- a dangerous one. To stay alive, she had had to stay alert. While most children learn good sleeping habits early, Saavik had never learned anything of the kind. Saavik had never know her parents and had no desire now to ever meet them.

This was one of many nights when sleep eluded her. It had been an eventful day, to say the least, culminating in the restoration to life of Spock, the closest thing she had ever had to a parent. She wondered what kind of environment he had been brought up in. Would he have trouble sleeping? Was he asleep now? Most probably not. The Vulcan healers, anxious to study the product of the first Katra ritual in thousands of years, had hurried him off to their chambers to examine him and determine the extent of their success.

Admiral Kirk and the others were asleep, though, most of them having literally passed out from exhaustion after having been provided room in Sarek and Amanda's house. Sarek himself was away, joining the elders in their studies; but his wife slept. Saavik quietly passed the entry to Amanda's bedroom. The door was open to allow for ventilation. Vulcan was hot at night, and humans didn't easily adjust -- even with the air conditioning at a level which made Vulcans shiver.

There was a slight rustle of bedclothes, and Saavik halted to see if she had awakened their hostess. Amanda lay still, quiet, having merely turned in her sleep as humans were so prone to do. In the dim light, Saavik saw a smile come to the lips of the older woman. She crept closer to the door, allowing herself a private moment to study the face of the woman who fascinated her so -- a human among Vulcans, an alien. Just as Saavik herself was an alien -- here and everywhere. She wondered often how an emotional human coped with a life so alien. Amanda was a constant source of mystery to her, but it was not her place to approach the ambassador's wife in public.

Still, a moment now would not be noticed by the others. She could look silently and wonder. Could her own mother have been like this? She didn't know which of her parents was Romulan and which was Vulcan. Could either species have produced a woman so gentle, so kind?

Amanda muttered something, and Saavik started, afraid she had awakened her. She called the woman's title quietly, but received no response. Amanda was talking in her sleep, obviously.

Saavik knew she should leave. No being had any control over what it communicated when sleeping, and to listen in would be a gross violation of privacy, un-Vulcan in the extreme. She turned away, but Amanda's voice sounded again, this time louder. She could make out the words.

"Leonard...?" Amanda murmured sleepily. "The Guardian? escape? ... what others? Damn you, Leonard McCoy, tell me who you are!"

Saavik didn't know what to think of these statements. Her natural curiosity overrode her guilt at having overheard privileged information. Spock's mother was speaking to Dr. McCoy in her sleep. But why? To the best of her knowledge, she and the doctor were no more than social acquaintances. They were both human, of course, and that factor could account for any number of unusual behaviors; but why should the Ambassador's wife be speaking so emotionally to the doctor? Was it merely the fancy of dreams? Or could the sharing of minds he had experienced with her son have had something to do with it?

This was not information she should rightly have possessed, so there was no one whose opinion she could ask. Spock was in no condition anyway, and Admiral Kirk would be familiar enough with Vulcan etiquette to know that she had committed an invasion of privacy. Even if he did not condemn her, he would no doubt tease her for being "too human." That might be even worse, she thought. She felt uncomfortable when humans examined her too closely. She knew that the feeling was a result of her own insecurity, that she doubted her own mystery of the Vulcan discipline and feared that someone might discover the hidden truth. Even though Kirk's admonitions were gentle, and not as antagonistic as McCoy's, for instance --

McCoy.

Yes, she would ask McCoy. Who better than the source of her confusion to answer her question. McCoy was so openly antagonistic toward Vulcan attitudes that he would probably not know to reprimand her breach of propriety.

In the morning, she decided, she would approach the doctor when he was alone. Saavik turned to go back to her room, planning to meditate for the remaining hours of the night. She might at least put her mind at ease if her body refused its required rest.

Near the end of the hallway that opened into the living area of the house, she heard soft footsteps. One of the others was about. Coming closer, she saw that McCoy and Kirk's door was open, and the doctor, clad in a robe and slippers, was exiting quietly.

She waited until he had closed the door behind him to speak. "Dr. McCoy," she whispered. "I trust I did not wake you."

McCoy turned, surprised to see her. He smiled wearily. "Hello, Saavik. No, my dear. I've just been sleeping since this morning, and I got a little hungry. Thought I'd raid Amanda's kitchen. What are you doing up?"

"I could not sleep, my mind has been ... occupied,"

He nodded. "Yes, I understand. C'mon," he gestured for her to follow. "I'll fix us something to drink."

Saavik followed quietly, marvelling at the resiliency of human character. Usually, Dr. McCoy was gruff and abrupt -- with everyone. With Spock he was always deliberately infuriating. Yet now he was -- how did humans describe the behavior? -- charming. How did humans survive being so inconsistent?

She put these thoughts aside. They were trivial questions and could be answered any time. Now was her opportunity to ask the far more baffling question posed by what she had overheard Amanda say. She and the doctor were alone, with little chance of being disturbed in the near future.

In the kitchen, a dim light warmed up from the ceiling to greet them as the computer registered the presence of life in the room. McCoy went to the food selector and keyed in a code. "Coffee?" he asked her, "Or would you like some hot chocolate?"

"Hot...?" Saavik began.

He laughed and keyed in a series of numbers. Two steaming cups came forth from the wall slot, and he handed her one. "Try it," he urged her. "Even Vulcans like hot chocolate."

Saavik took the cup and sipped tentatively at the contents, as McCoy was doing. The doctor made a slight wince as the beverage touched his lips, attesting to its heat. When Saavik took a small amount of liquid in her mouth, however, she found it distinctly tepid. She always forgot that human had such a low tolerance to heat. The drink, however, was pleasant enough. It had a rich, sweet taste. "Is this native to Earth?" she asked.

"Yep. It's a favorite of humans who have trouble sleeping at night."

She nodded, filing the information away in her mind in case she ever came across a human who was having trouble sleeping. After a moment's pondering of the brown liquid in her cup, she announced, "Doctor, I have a question I believe you might be able to help me with."

"Oh," the Doctor leaned both his elbows on the table and clasped his hot chocolate in both hands. "And what might that be?"

"I was ..." She paused a moment, outlining in her mind a logical strategy to follow in asking the necessary questions. "I was passing Amanda's room just now, and I heard her stirring. When I listened to see if I had inadvertently awakened her, I heard her talking in her sleep. I believe this is common among humans?"

"Yes, it is."

"I was somewhat ..." she searched for the proper word. "puzzled by the things I heard her say."

"And what did she say?" he asked, taking another sip and leaning his chair back on its hind legs.

"She mentioned your name, and something about escape. And a legal term, I assume -- guardian."

McCoy choked on his drink and almost fell backwards out of his chair. Saavik rushed to his aid, fearing he might injure himself in his weakened condition. He recovered quickly, though, regaining his balance in time to bring the chair down on all four legs.

"Are you all right, Doctor?" asked Saavik, disturbed by this display.

He breathed deeply for a moment. "Yeah, yeah ... I'm fine, I guess."

"I apologize if I upset you," she offered. Humans were such confusing creatures, one never knew what might prompt a negative reaction from one of them.

He shook his head slowly. "No, no. That's all right, It's just that I didn't expect anyone to ever ask me about this."

"I take it then that Amanda's words held some significance to you?"

He nodded. "Yeah."

"But I was under the impression that you only knew each other in a social context. The tone of her voice, if I read human intonations correctly, was very emotional. If such emotion is employed between casual social acquaintances, I must re-evaluate my understanding of --"

"No, Saavik," interrupted the doctor, "you don't need to re-evaluate anything."

"Then there is an emotional tie between yourself and Captain Spock's mother?" McCoy was silent. "If I am intruding in your privacy, I will question no further."

After a moment's silence, McCoy rose from his seat. He took her hand and lifted her gently from the kneeling position she had assumed by his side. With an arm about her shoulders, he led her to the living room, gesturing to the couch. "I guess it's time someone heard the story. God knows I've never told Jim ... You may as well get comfortable, honey, it's gonna be along rest of the night." He sat and began to explain ...

The whole damn thing started with the Guardian. "Guardian," in this case, isn't legal term. The Guardian is a gateway into time. It's

a kind of machine -- well, it's a being I guess. I'm not sure exactly what the thing is, to tell you the truth; and it won't give you a straight answer if its life depends on it.

Anyway, the Guardian of Forever is a time portal, pure and simple. It lets you look into and visit the past. Starfleet uses it for top-secret historical research. The Enterprise visited it a few times to investigate something on which the Federation needed more information.

We'd been ordered there this particular time to observe the Federation Council meetings concerning some of our earliest encounters with the Klingon Empire. It seems our devoted leaders needed a more complete transcript of that meeting in order to solve a current problem. If they'd just bothered to tape the damn things ... well, that's government.

Well, as usual, Jim and Spock dragged me along on this mission. They were always doing that -- guess they needed a cool head along to keep them outta trouble. We went through the time portal and materialized inside the Federation Council Chambers on that specified day of the hearing that we were supposed to make a record of.

We weren't visible to them. The Guardian does this neat little trick we call "etherealizing." It makes us sort of outta phase with the time we're observing so that we can see and hear everything, just as if we were really there; but no one can see or hear us. Keeps us from screwing up the works, I suppose.

We all had our tricorders running. Sarek had just gotten up to address the assembly. He was brand-new then, still wet behind the ears, appointed only a month before. He was giving Vulcan's opinion of the matter -- as I recall the Klingons had just swooped in one day and wiped out a few thousand Federation citizens. I don't remember the whole issue -- I never listened much to galactic politics. I'm just a simple country doctor; I don't really understand politics or politicians too well. Nor do I want to; I'm happier this way.

I don't know what happened. Maybe the damn Guardian blew a fuse or one of its vacuum tubes cracked -- who knows? But one minute Jim and Spock were there and the next minute they were gone. And I felt a little sensation like ... sort of like switching from one-half gee to a full gravity all at once. Ethereality isn't a weightless condition exactly; but there's something different about it, different enough that when you drop out of it all of a sudden, you know about it.

I dropped out.

Here I was in the middle of the Council Chamber, no idea in hell how I got left ther, no idea how I was going to explain it to anyone else, and definitely no idea how I was going to get out -- except that it might involve phasers and handcuffs and security escorts.

Sarek spotted me first. No major feat -- I was standing right in the center of the damn room, practically breathing down his neck. The

whole lot of ambassadors and guards and newsmen went crazy. They started chattering way in a thousand different languages, wondering where this crazy human came from all of a sudden. There was no transporter effect or anything, I just popped in. I'm sure some of them thought I was a Klingon spy come to assassinate Sarek. Hell, some of them probably thought it was the second coming. Personally, I hope when Christ does return he isn't wearing a Starfleet uniform.

Sarek was the first one to talk right to me. He was loud enough to be heard, but naturally he wasn't upset or anything. "Who are you, sir?"

I stammered. Then I stuttered. Then I got clever; I said, "Damn good question, Ambassador."

Well, before he could ask me anything else, the security police worked their way through the crowd that was filling up the center circle of the chamber and two of them grabbed my arms and pulled me back. "Don't worry Ambassador," one of them said. If that damn fool guard had had any brains he would have seen that Sarek wasn't worried at all. Now me, I was terrified.

I hate having to think fast. Medical men are trained to make split-second decisions when necessary, but we're also trained not to like it so that we don't get too impulsive. Now I had to think fast. Once they hauled me away into a nice little cell, there was no chance I'd be able to do anything to help myself; and God only knew whether Jim and Spock were in any position to help me. For all I knew they were dead or trapped somewhere else in time.

There was only one person I thought I could turn to to help me. I called out across the room to Sarek, "Ambassador, I need to talk to you! It's about your son!"

Then I slumped and let the guards carry me off while I silently thanked Jim and Spock for another fine mess they'd gotten me into.

It was a few hours before Sarek showed up -- although I had no doubt that he would. The guard admitted him and told him to stand outside my cell. They obviously didn't trust me enough to let me near him without a force field between us. I guess I didn't blame them. I was, after all, a raving madman who had just appeared out of thin air in the middle of a top-security area.

Sarek was very reasonable. For the first time in my life, I was glad to see some good old Vulcan restraint. "They tell me your name is Dr. Leonard McCoy," he said first. "And that you claim to serve in Starfleet on the USS Enterprise."

"That's right, sir."

Sarek kind of gave me an expression that looked like he felt sorry for me -- if I stretched my imagination real far. "Dr. McCoy, the USS Enterprise will not begin construction until next year at the earliest. Furthermore, if you have knowledge of its workings -- and the guards assure me you gave adequate description of the project --

you are either a spy or a very high-ranking official." Then he looked at my uniform, which was fine except that it wouldn't come into style for fifty years or so yet. "Your uniform resembles Starfleet's design, however --"

"Ambassador," I interrupted, "I know it sounds unlikely, but I am telling you the truth. My name is Leonard McCoy, and I am Senior Medical Officer aboard the USS Enterprise."

He looked thoughtful for a moment and I thought I might be getting to him. Then he said, "You mentioned my son."

"Yes," I said, growing excited.

"I have no son."

I swore. Loudly. I hadn't considered that I was back so far in time that Spock wouldn't be born for ... three years. Sarek and Amanda probably weren't even married yet. I had done a very thorough job of making a complete ass of myself. "You must have thought I was raving. I don't blame you if you send me to a rehab colony."

"I would think that an extreme measure, given that the facts of your situation have not been fully examined. The guards tell me you were very uncooperative; you wouldn't answer their questions."

"I couldn't answer their questions."

"You do not know the answers?"

"Oh, I know them all right," I said hopelessly. "But no one would believe them -- and if they did the future of the entire galaxy would be in big trouble."

One of Sarek's eyebrows raised in an oh-so-familiar fashion. "Indeed?" He reached over, pulled a chair up in front of my cell door and sat down, looking genuinely excited for once. "I must say, Doctor, I am intrigued. Could you tell me your story?"

I didn't have to think that over. I had been thinking about it for hours. If I told anybody about the future and the Guardian, I could cause repercussions that might change the future. On the other hand, if I didn't, I'd most likely be stranded in the past and then the future would be in even bigger trouble. If I had to spend the rest of my life here, I would have endless opportunities to make a mess of the continuum. I had to tell someone, and Sarek was the only one I could think of.

I explained the whole situation to him -- leaving out as many future references as I could. I didn't tell him about Amanda and Spock. He didn't even ask about his son. I guess he figured the less he knew the better. I admired his restraint. If I had been told I was going to have a son someday, I would have sure asked questions.

I didn't tell him that I had come here with Spock; I just said I had been with "friends." I gave him the least technical explanation I could about the Guardian; of course I couldn't have given a technical

explanation if I'd tried.

Now, I would have thought that my story would have rattled even the new Ambassador from Vulcan, but Sarek just stood there, hands folded and barely protruding from his robe. Blasted Vulcan control! I would've liked at least a nice "I'll be damned!" Instead, all I got was, "Fascinating." (Actually I think that means "I'll be damned" in Vulcan)

I sighed heavily. "I don't suppose you have any suggestions?"

He seemed to need some time to think about that one. "Assuming you are speaking the truth --"

"I am."

"-- and that you are not in some way mentally incompetent --"

"Ambassador --"

"There is," he said almost hesitantly, "a method by which I might verify your story."

"The mind meld?" I guessed. "no, sir. That's impossible."

Sarek's eyebrows (both of them, for a change) shot up. They shot up slowly, but they did shoot up. I suddenly realized that a human with knowledge of mind melds was a bit of a rarity -- even in my time.

Sarek nodded the way he always does. Except for a little gray, he hasn't changed much over the years. "I see. A meld would probably reveal too much of the future -- assuming you are from the future. the problem is, I have no way of verifying your account. The fact that mind meld is dangerous provides you with a convenient method to cover the possible untruth of what you have told me."

I didn't blame him for doubting me. I would have had me in Sickbay under nineteen different kinds of observations by now. I shook my head. "Maybe we'd better forget the whole thing."

"No, I hardly think that a wise course of action. If you are telling the truth, your presence here creates a danger to the fabric of time. I have done some study in this field," he explained in that Vulcan tone of explanation. He was starting to find the theory of the situation more engrossing than the reality of my predicament. "If you are from the future," he said after a lengthy piece I didn't really understand, "we must see to it that you are returned."

Now, that was intelligent. "But how will you verify my story?" I asked.

"The situation requires some meditation on my part. I take it you would prefer me not to ask for assistance in the matter?"

"Yeah -- I mean no! Don't tell anyone!"

"Agreed." He gestured toward me with one hand from behind his sleeve. "Come."

"Where?"

"To the Vulcan Embassy. I will arrange lodging for you there."

"But --" I started, eyeing the heavily-armed guard outside my cell.

"Do not concern yourself, Doctor," he said calmly. "Being an ambassador allows me certain privileges."

Five minutes later, I was in a transit tube car on my way to the Vulcan Embassy in San Francisco.

I've always liked the Vulcan Embassy; it has style. Before anyone tells me they've caught me consorting with the enemy, let me point out that the Vulcan Embassy is a converted twentieth century mansion. They built houses with character then -- not those prefab, computerized monstrosities they ask too much for nowadays. Of course, the Embassy had computerized the house--they were Vulcans, after all--but the apparatus was well hidden.

Sarek led me to a room and showed me the available facilities. I was happy to have my own food selector; I was raised in Georgia on Southern cooking. I can't palate that alien stuff some places serve.

He bade me good night -- it was well on toward midnight by now -- and left me alone. I guess I'm not the most relaxed person in the world; I've never been able to sleep very well when something's wrong. Even when nothing's wrong, I sit up half the night wondering what's going to go wrong tomorrow. And I don't sleep very well in a bed I'm not used to, so I took a few tranquilizers and punched up a book on the screen -- I think it was Poe, I was in one of those moods -- and I finally drifted off about oh-two-hun -- damn military! Two o'clock.

I was up with sunrise the next morning, hoping to get an early start at finding a way to prove my story to Sarek or just plain and simply get back to my own time any old way. I took a shower, brushed my teeth, ate my breakfast while looking out at San Francisco harbor of some forty years before my time, and then ventured out of my room. I had free run of the house and grounds, since I wasn't a prisoner while under embassy protection. I wasn't about to go outside the fence, though. A trouble-maker I'm not -- usually.

I was admiring the woodwork on the staircase and wondering how much they would ask if I wanted to buy the place as a retirement home when I saw her. She was entering the computer room off the main lobby, and stopped to see who was coming down the stairs.

Amanda.

I hadn't expected her to be so beautiful. I mean, I knew she was beautiful, even at sixty plus years, but ... I guess I just hadn't ever looked at her as a peer before. Beauty takes on a whole new meaning when considered from that angle. She wasn't Spock's mother now, nor the wife of the ambassador of all Vulcan. She was just beautiful.

She smiled, and I realized I had been staring. I smiled back for a moment or so, and then thought of something stupid to say. "Hello--" I started to say "Lady Amanda." She was a lady, but not that kind, not yet. And I wasn't supposed to know who she was yet.

Sarek must've heard me, 'cause he came out of the computer room just then. "Good morning, Doctor. I trust your accommodations were sufficient."

"Beautiful," I mumbled. Fortunately, Vulcans are naive enough about humans that Sarek thought I was talking about the house. I recovered and said dumbly, "I mean everything is fine." Amanda and Sarek both must have realized I was blushing, but they didn't say anything.

"Good," said Sarek. He gestured to Amanda. "may I introduce Amanda Grayson? She is a linguist, studying on special attachment to the embassy."

I nodded and kept smiling. "Hi."

"and this is Dr. Leonard McCoy of Starfleet."

Amanda was holding my gaze. I started to feel very uncomfortable. "Doctor McCoy? A medical doctor?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"What are you --"

Sarek interrupted quickly. "Dr. McCoy and I have some pressing matters to attend to, Ms. Grayson. If you will excuse us."

She smiled. "Of course, Sarek."

Stupid damn Vulcan! Who could be fool enough not to pay any attention to that smile? I wondered if Amanda had fallen in love with him yet, or if she was just being polite. God help me, some part of me hoped desperately for the latter.

Sarek sat me down in one of the house's sixteen parlors and faced me. "I believe you," he said flatly.

Well, I was astounded. "That was fast," I said. "What convinced you?"

He reached into his pocket and took out my communicator. "This. I took it to one of our communications experts here last night. She analyzed it and confirmed that the design was some three to four decades in advance of current communications technology."

"I see, so." I settled back into the sofa and raised my hands expectantly. "Since you've obviously given the matter a lot of thought, what now?"

He inclined his head and said quietly. "While you are correct in assuming I have given the utmost priority and a great deal of thought to your problem, you are mistaken if you think I have uncovered a solution."

I slumped. "I thought as much. Your belief is comforting Sarek. But it doesn't help one bit if there's no way for us to return me to my time."

He steepled his fingers the way Spock always does. "This 'Guardian of Forever' you spoke of yesterday. If you returned to its world now, you could use it to return to your own time." I didn't know if he was asking me or telling me.

I just said, "Right. But I don't have any way of getting there."

"You do not know its location?"

"Not really, no. I mean, I might find the system if you showed me a star chart -- might! -- but that area of space was only mapped about two years ago. I mean thirty-eight years from now -- oh, hell, you get the idea."

"I believe I do."

"Besides that, I can't take you or anyone else there in a ship. I can't let anyone in this time know where the Guardian is, no matter how much trust I have in them. The Guardian's very highly classified. If the Klingons --" I shut up. It wasn't a good idea to let Sarek know too much about the people he was currently negotiating with. I had said too much already. "Anyway, I can't take anyone else there, and I can't fly myself."

"A most interesting problem," Sarek said casually.

That pissed me off. Only a little, but it did piss me off. "Ambassador, I don't find any of this damned interesting."

Sarek looked really surprised. "Oh? Indeed? The science of time mechanics holds no interest for you?"

"Not now!"

His head shook just so slightly. "Why do Humans allow their emotional state to interfere with more fit pursuits of the mind? The information that could be gained from observing an occurrence like this --"

Dammit, Spock --" I stopped. Now I had done it. I just sat there and kept my mouth shut, figuring that was the best.

Deciding that he wasn't going to get me interested in any "more fit pursuits," Sarek changed the subject. "Tell me, these colleagues of yours who were with you -- do you not think they will have deduced the reason for your disappearance and are now working on a method by which they may return you?"

"Probably," I said irritably. "I don't know." The whole situation was beginning to get on my nerves. A few hours trapped in the past was distracting, but I don't want to be here any longer. I wanted to go *home*.

Sarek stood up. "If you will excuse me, I will meditate on the problem." He stopped when he got to the door and said, "May I recommend that you attempt meditation as well? Your emotional state is hardly beneficial to the situation."

Before I could get anything sufficiently foul out of my mouth, he was gone. I supposed I shouldn't have been mad at him; he was only trying to help. He was just so much like Spock!

I was beginning to wonder if I would ever see that particular ugly Vulcan's ugly face again when Amanda came into the parlor, distracting me from my grim thoughts. She paused, smiled and walked over to me. "Hello again," she said. It was *that* smile.

I wished she hadn't smiled it. I wished she'd frowned or scowled or smirked or just stayed away from me. I didn't like how she made me feel; I didn't like it one damn bit!

"Hello," I gulped.

She sat down where Sarek had been and began to study me. I must have adjusted my position on the couch a hundred times in those few moments. She was wearing one of those light, springy dresses -- loose over all, but just tight enough where it needed to be. I often recommended to my elderly patients with heart conditions that they move to a puritanistic planet which didn't allow dresses like that one.

I was spellbound.

"So, you're a doctor. You didn't tell me what your business was at the embassy. Are you planning to emigrate to Vulcan?"

God what a thought! Still, it was as good an excuse as any. I gritted my teeth. "I'm thinking of relocating, yes." Now that wasn't exactly a lie.

"How exciting! I've been wanting to see Vulcan for years, but I'm so busy with my teaching now. Have you been there before?"

"Two or three times, yes."

"And you have friends?"

"Our ... our first officer's family lives there." This was getting easy!

"Oh, is your first officer a Vulcan?"

Oops! As far as I knew, there were no Vulcans in the fleet yet. "No, his -- parents are human. They're attached to the embassy there." Always keep the story as true as possible, that's what Jim taught me about lying.

"I see," she smiled again. "Forgive me if I seem to be grilling you. It's just that I haven't seen a human for some weeks now -- "

"Don't you ever get out?" I blurted.

She laughed, and suddenly I didn't want to go back to my own time. "Well, I must admit I've been very busy with my studies lately. I'm on leave from the University, you see. The head of the department is taking over my lectures and he sends me the papers to grade."

"A woman as beautiful as you should get out more. It's a shame to have you wasted on all these unappreciative Vulcans." It slipped! I couldn't help it!

"Why... thank you, Doctor. That's very kind." Her eyes sparkled.

"My dear, I only report the truth as I see it. And please, call me Leonard."

"All right. Amanda?"

"Amanda."

"Good. I detest hearing Ms. Grayson all the time. I'm very interested in Vulcans as a people, but they're so awfully stuffy!" She looked at the antique clock over the mantle. "I was just about to have some lunch on the terrace. Will you join me? "

"I'd be delighted." I knew I should turn tail and run upstairs, but damnnit, I was enjoying myself!

We got lunch from the nearest food selectors -- they were the old style; they took almost five minutes to complete the order -- and headed outside. The garden behind the house was the most beautiful I'd seen in some time. It has always amazed me that Vulcans are so cold and yet always have beauty around them -- like Sarek had the most beautiful woman in the universe around him all the time. To my regret, but hardly my surprise, I was growing increasingly jealous at that thought.

We carried our trays to the meshwork tables decorating the brick patio and found a sunny spot. It was springlike out, and it felt good to sit in the sun. Even displaced in time, even in Southern California, I got the feeling of having just recovered from a long winter.

Amanda picked at her food daintily. I sat quiet for a while, thinking of something conversational. "I guess you eat alone pretty often around here?"

She laughed. "Oh, sometimes. The Vulcans aren't completely unsociable, though. They're always quite content to join me for a theoretical discussion of comparative linguistics."

I made a sort of nauseated sound. "That must get dull -- I'd rather eat alone."

"And Sarek eats with me on occasion. I think he feels it's his duty to get to know as many aliens as possible for the sake of universal harmony."

Maybe she believed that -- maybe he did, too... for now. I knew the truth, and it was beginning to grate on me more and more. It's funny how you can get so riled up over things you can't change. Of course, those are usually the kinds of things I get the most riled up over. I hate being helpless. Right then, I really wished that I could change what I knew must happen, that I could make Amanda turn away from Sarek before they even came together. I didn't really care about the future of the universe. Of course, changing the past would mean Spock's never being born, and I'll admit... No. Whatever else Spock and I have said to each other, I wouldn't... couldn't deprive him of the opportunity to be born.

Still, I wasn't too sure my thoughts at that time regarding Amanda were very gentlemanly.

I realized that I had gotten quiet and was toying with my food. Amanda was looking at me funny. "Is something wrong, Leonard?"

"Oh, no," I stammered. "I was just... looking at the birds. I don't see birds very often."

She looked up as I did. Thank God, there were a few of the feathered monsters passing overhead. "I guess you don't at that," she agreed. "Really, I don't think I could take being cooped up in a ship like that all the time. I'm rather an earthbound person, I suppose."

Now that seemed like an odd comment for a woman destined to spend over three-quarters of her life on another planet -- a very un-Earthlike planet. I didn't say anything more about it, afraid I would slip something about the future. And she didn't even know I was from the future. I went back to her earlier comment, the one that had bothered me so much. Isn't it funny how you always dwell on the things that bother you the most? "Do you get along with Sarek pretty well?"

"Leonard," she said by way of correction, "nobody doesn't get along with a Vulcan."

Hah! Your son, lady! I tried not to laugh. "Oh, of course. What do you talk about with him?"

"His family, his planet. I'm really fascinated with Vulcan. It's so..."

God-forsaken? I thought. "Different?" I said.

She shrugged, not satisfied with the word. "I suppose. Sarek makes it sound like a beautiful place."

"Vulcan?"

"Surprising, isn't it? Vulcans claim to be so unfeeling, yet they're so artistic. In many ways, they're everything the human race has always aspired to being."

"Except warm."

"Oh, but their body temperature is much higher than ours."

She actually said that with a straight face. She burst into laughter immediately afterwards, but while she said it, she had a straight face. I laughed too. "You really need to get away from them."

"It does rub off," she admitted. "But it has advantages. I find that Sarek's suggestions have helped me concentrate on my work. I've gotten much more efficient. Why, I translated almost half of a Vulcan philosophy texts in one night last week. I completely lost track of time. Their way of thinking... they can get so caught up in a problem. I really admire that."

"Sounds like you admire a lot about them."

"Oh, I do. And you must too, if you're moving to Vulcan."

"Well," I half-lied, "they grow on you."

"Yes," Amanda agreed. She had finished her lunch and put her tray aside on the brick wall separating the patio from the garden. "Despite their coldness, they're... well, they're so honorable. It's said Vulcans don't lie. I think that's a little extreme; but, if they do, I've yet to see it. I would think the circumstances would have to be extraordinary."

Could have told her a few! I just nodded. I was getting just a wee bit uncomfortable, as Scotty might say, sitting here discussing the virtues of Vulcans -- especially given that the particular Vulcan she was thinking of was Sarek. I had no doubt. "Well," I said finally, "I haven't dealt with too many Vulcans. Sarek's the only one I know well. But I suppose they're all right. You... like Sarek, don't you?"

"I suppose I do." She stared at me a moment, and for a moment, God help me, I envied those damn Vulcans. At least they could read minds. "But Leonard," she said emphatically, "he's a *Vulcan*."

I coughed up my last bite of food. Graceful. Damn graceful. Was she hinting what I thought she was hinting? Why did she look at me that way? We both knew she wanted Sarek... or did we? This was not helping me find a way home, I decided suddenly. And besides, I was making myself miserable. I got up. "Excuse me. I have to get inside. I promised Sarek I'd meet him this afternoon."

I walked to the house, tense, waiting for her to say something, praying I'd get inside before she did. Coward. Only a few more feet left...

"Leonard." I turned. "How about dinner?"

Don't do it, I thought. Don't torture yourself. Tell her to have dinner with Sarek. Right. I was going to tell her just that. One, two, three... "Sure. See you at seven."

Damn, simperin' coward!

Well, I did go and meet Sarek that night, and we discussed all sorts of "fascinating problems in logic" and made absolutely no progress of any kind. This went on for about a week. During this week, I saw quite a bit of Mandy, as I was starting to call her. I've always liked that name, Mandy.

After dinner one evening, we decided to go for a walk by the full moon in the garden. I hadn't really explored the garden yet, and I was glad to take the opportunity, especially with her. It had been months since I'd been on earth and taken a walk under a full moon, and I'd missed it. Looking at Mandy in that light, I realized I'd been missing something all along.

We stopped by the fountain in the lowest tier of the garden and sat by its edge on the low stone wall. Mandy was trailing her fingers in the water, breaking up the reflection of the moon and making it ripple through the mirrored surface. "You know," she said, "I once heard that people used to toss coins into fountains like this one and make a wish -- I think my grandmother told me that. I suppose nowadays anybody who had a coin wouldn't be so frivolous as to throw it into a fountain."

I laughed and shook my head. "Oh, the unromantic twenty-third century and its credit accounts." I gazed at her, leaning back toward the water, watching the stars. Trying to keep my mind from dangerous thoughts, I said, "I haven't seen a coin in years -- my granddaddy had a few, used to show them to me when I visited. Don't know what ever happened to them."

"Probably sold."

"Probably. But if I had them," I rambled without thinking, "I'd gladly toss them in there for a chance to make a wish with you."

She smiled, and my heart began to dance. I'm a medical man, I know a human heart can't dance, but I also know for fact that's exactly what mine was doing.

Mandy went back to looking at the stars. "We could still wish on one of those. I guess to you they're just balls of flaming gasses, aren't they?"

I shrugged. "I've never really stopped to think about them."

"Why did you go into space, Leonard?"

I didn't really want to get into that. I try never to dredge up that part of my life -- it's over and that's enough for me. "I don't know," I evaded, "I guess everybody needs something to do with their time."

"And your something is outer space."

"Yeah." Eager to change the subject, I reached down and scooped up a handful of the smooth, round stones that surrounded the fountain.

"Did you ever skip stones in the water, Mandy?" I asked, studying them. "Granddaddy showed me that, too, when he used to take me fishing... "

I started to think about Granddaddy and our fishing trips. He was my mother's father -- the one I took after -- and he lived up in the mountains. He taught me all about being a boy in the mountains instead of an androgynous carbon unit in the city complexes. Visits with Granddaddy made up my fondest memories of childhood. There was just a... I don't know... a feeling I associated with those times, a happy feeling buried far up in the mountains in an old-fashioned grave. Just like Granddaddy.

And, strangely enough, I was getting that childhood feeling back -- for the first time in thirty years. Was it... Mandy?

"What are you thinking?"

I jumped. "Oh, sorry... uh..."

"You do that a lot." She was looking at me with a teasing smile.

"Do I?"

"What were you thinking?"

"Just that I'm..." I hesitated, feeling the danger. If I admitted the truth to her, to myself, I would open a door I might never close.

"You're what?"

"Ah, happy."

She studied my face, my eyes for a moment. My pulse quickened. I felt like a cadet at inspection time. "You don't say that often, do you?"

I shook my head.

Mandy drew close to me, her hands on my shoulder. Her breath was on my face. My palms were sweating; that hadn't happened in... well, years.

"Leonard," she whispered.

I knew what was coming. I'd prayed for it, but it terrified me. I couldn't let the illusion go on, and I knew this was my last chance to stop it. But... damnit! I wanted her, wanted nothing but to be with her, to promise her a future.

But I couldn't promise that. She already had a future... with another man, a full and happy future. I could only cause her pain.

She was looking at me, waiting. Waiting for me to offer her something, to ask her to come with me. And there wasn't a damn thing I could say! I looked away from her.

She took hold of my arm, trying to turn me. "Leonard, what's wrong? There's something you're not telling me?"

Again, I shook my head. I groaned. "It's impossible, Mandy."

"What?" she asked, growing frightened.

I started to stand. "I think it's better for both of us -- "

Her voice jumped out and grabbed me. "Don't say it, Leonard! I know what you're thinking and please, don't say it! Something's happened here, between us. Don't tell me you don't feel it."

"I feel it." The words crawled out painfully. "But," I softened my tone, "Mandy, we don't have a chance. I'm sorry." I felt tears coming to my eyes, the same tears that were now falling down Amanda's cheeks.

"I know it hasn't been long, only two weeks, but I -- "

I came to her and covered her lips with my fingers. "Don't say it, Mandy. Don't hurt yourself. It's useless."

She collapsed against me in tears. I realized I was crying, too. I hadn't cried in years, not since my wife had left. Actually, it had been a little bit before she had left. I had given up crying in those days. Now I was feeling things inside that I thought I would never feel again... prayed I would never feel.

"Why?" she asked against my shoulder. "Can't you even tell me that?"

I looked down at her, brushing a tear from her cheek. She looked in my eyes... and it happened. Our faces came together, and we kissed.

I forgot everything. I forgot where and when I was. Only one thought was in my mind. I loved Amanda Grayson.

We went inside, although I don't remember doing it. And we went to my room. Neither of us said a word; we didn't have to. We knew what we were thinking. We knew what we wanted, just at that moment. I won't go into any details, but I slept that night, for the first time since I'd been there.

I did something dumb that night, something utterly silly, crazy and romantic. I slipped out of bed, made my way down the hardwood steps, and ventured out into the cold night wearing only my bathrobe.

The stones were freezing! And sharp -- some of them hurt my feet. It had been so long since I'd been out at night barefoot, I'd forgotten the joys of cold, wet, cut feet, with bits of dirt and leaves on the soles.

The Vulcans -- bless their pointed hearts -- had planted rose bushes in the garden. I went to the big red one and looked for the best, most perfect rose to place on Amanda's pillow. They were all likely specimens; the Vulcan gardener was dedicated.

I reached for one, a beauty; but then, on the ground I saw it. It had fallen not long ago, a somewhat bedraggled rose, frayed around the edges. It wasn't perfect, nor was it beautiful, but...

I've never cared much for people, never been very nice to them or sentimental about them. I guess I'm just a bitter old man, but I do have a funny streak. I feel sorry for things. I can't explain it, it's crazy -- just as crazy as Scotty loving his engines. But I felt -- don't laugh! (You wouldn't, would you?) -- I felt that if I left that rose behind and picked another, it would cry.

Poor, pathetic little flower.

I scooped it up, hoping Mandy would understand such a silly gesture. Stuffing it in the pocket of my robe, I turned to dash for the house, anticipating warm feet.

And my heart sank.

There he was, a cruel figure in the moonlight, the gold of his uniform turned silvery green.

Jim.

Not now! my mind screamed. He stood there a moment, accusing. No, that was my imagination. Jim had no reason to accuse me. He rushed to me. "Bones! Thank God!" He grabbed my arms and awung me around. "We didn't know what had happened, we thought you'd been killed when the Guardian failed. We still don't know what caused it, it blacked out for about an hour... but God, I'm glad to see you!"

He was smiling, grinning from ear to ear he was so happy to have found me. His happiness was killing me, tearing me apart. How much could a man take, I wondered? How often could his heart be ripped to pieces and still survive the strain?

His smile faded. "Bones! We're going home. What's wrong?" He looked me over. "And what are you doing out here?"

I pulled away. "I... Jim, I can't go."

"What do you mean, can't go? Bones, you have to!" His expression was grim now. My friend was gone; he was a starship captain now.

I was coming apart. "I can't, Jim... I can't explain. It's -- I..." I shook in frustration. I wished I could smash something. "God damnit!"

Jim was next to me immediately. "Bones! We've got to go. You've been here too long! Come on, we've got to get back to the drop point -- the Guardian has to pick us up."

He could tell I wasn't listening to him. "Bones! Please." He stared at me, trying to look through my eyes into my mind. "Bones, what's happened?"

I slumped, defeated. "I can't tell you, Jim. Please let me have just five minutes."

"Bones, no!"

I said, now determined. "Jim, I've got to have five minutes!"

Jim straightened his shoulders and said harshly, "Dr. McCoy, I order you to come with me."

I was growing desperate, another minute and I was going to clout Jim on the head and run. "Jim, please! I'll come, but give me five minutes."

He stared at me. Who knows what he was thinking. Maybe he figured I'd lost my mind. Maybe I figured the same thing. "Is it that important?" he asked.

I nodded. He gestured.. "Five minutes, or I'll come in and drag you out."

"I'll be here," I promised grudgingly.

I left him and re-entered the darkened house. After the brightness of the moon outside, my eyes took time to adjust. I had to feel my way through the rear hallway into the foyer.

As my hand caught the ornate end of the stairway railing, I heard a creaking from above me. Someone was coming down the steps. It couldn't be... she keyed the lights on.

Amanda.

I meant to play it innocent, but her expression was accusing... and scared.

"~~Why~~ are you out of bed?" I asked.

Her voice quivered. Her eyes were wet. Did she know? How? "I woke up, and you were gone. I..."

"Well," I started to explain.

"Leonard," she said flatly. "I heard."

"How?" was all I could manage.

She shrugged, trembling (Rage? Fear?) "Through the windows."

Had we been that loud? I hadn't realized. "Oh." I looked at the floor guiltily.

"Leonard, who was that man? What was he talking about?"

"I -- "

"He wants you to leave with him, doesn't he?"

I swallowed. "Yes."

Mandy came toward me and took my hands. I pulled away. She noticed.

"What's wrong? Oh, Leonard, what's going on? What was he talking about? 'Drop point' and 'Guardian.' "

"It's... " I damned myself for the words, "a secret."

Mandy shook her head, tears streaming down her cheeks. "Why?" she demanded. "Is that the kind of work you do?"

I said nothing, letting her believe it. She turned away, her hands slipping from mine. "And you knew you'd be leaving, didn't you?"

Again, my silence answered for me. Amanda's fists clenched. "You... bastard!"

I started toward her, my hands reaching. "Mandy -- "

"You -- led me on! You knew!"

"Mandy," I said again, a lump in my throat.

"No," she sobbed. "Don't say it! Don't say anything." She stared at me, and I wanted to die. I watched, helpless, paralyzed, as Mandy moved up the first few steps. She faced me a last time. I would never forget that awful, betrayed stare. "I... love you, Leonard."

As she disappeared up the steps, I slumped against the railing. "I love you too, Mandy," I choked.

My eyes were wet, and I reached into my pocket, trying to find a tissue. My hand caught something limp -- the rose. The one I'd meant for Mandy.

Mandy. Poor, pathetic little flower.

We stepped out of the Guardian. Spock was waiting there for us. "Welcome home, Doctor," he said flatly. I stared at him a moment. Spock, the product of a union that had broken my heart. "Is something troubling you, Doctor?"

So much like Sarek, I thought. "Not a damn thing, Spock. You're as ugly as ever."

"I fail to understand why you would expect my appearance to have changed, Doctor. And as for your choice of terms -- "

"Never mind, Spock," said Jim, chuckling and squeezing my shoulder. "Let's get back to the ship."

"Wait," said a voice. It was the Guardian, its voice booming across the landscape.

Jim turned to it. "Yes, Guardian?"

"The one named McCoy must remain. There are adjustments to be made."

Spock raised his eyebrow. "What adjustments?"

"They do not concern you," said the Guardian pompously. "I've always disliked the Guardian. I wonder whose personality they programmed it with. I wouldn't have liked him either. "Kirk and Spock will return to the vessel. McCoy will remain momentarily. Go now."

Jim looked at me, unsure. "Go on," I said. "I'll be fine."

He squeezed my shoulder again and nodded. "C'mon, Spock," he said, pulling out his communicator. "Beam us up, Mr. Scott," he told it, and they were gone.

I was alone on the Time Planet. It wasn't a pleasant place to be alone. The howling wind fit my mood, though. It suggested desolation as it passed between the ruins. "Well?" I asked the Guardian.

"The past must be corrected," it said. "Your intervention with Amanda Grayson has caused perturbations in the time stream. They must be calmed, or they will damage the fabric of time."

"What can you do?"

"I must correct Amanda Grayson's memory. I must cause her to forget what passed between you or her relationship with Sarek will be hindered."

"Why do you need me here?" I asked resentfully.

"Since you are the cause of the time disturbance, I must use your memory to pinpoint the periods of interruption in history accurately."

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"It is done," announced the Guardian. "I guess it had worked while we talked. "Observe."

A picture appeared in its center, a picture of the past I had just left. Amanda was mounting the staircase of the old house which contained the Vulcan embassy. She came to Sarek's office door and knocked. His voice responded from beyond the heavy wooden door, and she entered.

Sarek looked up from his desk where he had been studying computer data. "Good morning, Ms. Grayson. What can I do for you?"

"I, uh -- " Amanda looked puzzled, like she had all of a sudden forgotten something. I had no doubt but what she had. The tears were gone from her eyes and her face was clear and beautiful again. "I was just wondering where Dr. McCoy had gone with the captain?"

"I believe he had an emergency to attend to aboard his ship. The captain will no doubt see to it that Dr. McCoy is taken to his destination once the situation has been attended to. I doubt he will return."

Amanda seemed surprised but not upset. "Oh," she said. "Is that all you know?"

Sarek thought a moment, then disproved the rumor that Vulcans can't lie. "No. He asked me to convey his apologies for his abrupt departure, and wanted me to tell you... goodbye."

Amanda smiled and nodded. It was clear she had forgotten nearly all that had passed between us. She remembered me as someone she had lunch with sometimes. "Well, I suppose it must have been important for him to go. When he gets to Vulcan, perhaps he'll send you his address?"

"Perhaps," Sarek agreed.

"Good. I'd like to drop him a postcard sometime." Amanda showed no trace of the emotional turmoil that had gone such a short time before. I didn't know if Sarek had overheard our argument. If he had, he must have figured by now that something had changed her memory. I hoped he could proceed now with a clear conscience.

Amanda started out the door and halted, looking back at Sarek. She seemed to remember something she had been putting off for a while. I cringed. "Sarek," she asked, smiling that smile, "I wonder if I could persuade you to join me for lunch later."

"I would be honored," he said.

The image faded, and the forlorn winds blew around me, chilling me. At least, I guess that's what made me shiver. "All is as it was before," said the Guardian. "The damage has been corrected."

"You altered her memory?"

"I did. It is not beyond my abilities to intervene, but I am programmed to avoid it where possible. In this case, it was necessary." There was a compassionate tone to its voice as it continued. "If you prefer, McCoy, your memory of the incident could be changed in a similar manner, to avoid further inconvenience."

I considered the Guardian's offer -- I really did. It would mean that the pain would go away, the pain I was so afraid was going to tear me apart. But then, it would also mean that I would have lost her again, lost her so badly that I would not even remember having her.

What was the old saying? 'It is better to have loved and lost... ' Mandy had brought alive in me feelings that had been dead for fifteen years. She'd made me happier than I'd been since my marriage had come apart. She'd

made me hurt more than I'd hurt since then, more than I thought I'd ever hurt again. She'd shown me a capacity for emotion I thought I'd lost for good.

I felt alive.

"No," I told it, "thank you. I'll keep my memories."

Saavik swallowed the last of her fifth cup of hot chocolate. She felt pleasantly sleepy as the first red glow of dawn came through the curtains of Sarek and Amanda's living room.

McCoy, relaxed in the recliner across from her, spread his hands. "So, that's the story. Pathetic, huh?"

Saavik considered. Did Dr. McCoy honestly want her to call his tale pathetic? It was an extremely painful experience in his life, and pain was the one feeling Saavik truly understood. What perverse streak of human nature would wish to make a joke of such pain? "No, I did not find it so. I am... "

"Don't be, honey. It was a long time ago, and everyone's forgotten. Time takes the pain away."

"Completely?" Saavik asked hopefully. Would time take away the pain of her recent losses? She wasn't sure she wanted it to.

"No. Never. If we didn't have pain, we wouldn't know what to do with happiness." The doctor smiled at her and winked. He rose and crossed to her, offering her his hand. "I think you might be able to sleep now. Just consider it a bedtime story."

"Bedtime?" Saavik asked. "Doctor, it is well after oh-six-hundred hours. I would hardly say -- "

McCoy laughed, though she didn't think he was laughing at her... exactly. "Never mind, Saavik. Get some sleep." He motioned her down the hall, and she went. She did feel tired.

McCoy smiled after the girl as she went into her room. He never thought he'd be telling a bedtime story to a sleepy Vulcan. He didn't think sleepy Vulcans could be cute.

He kept smiling as he went to the window to watch the scarlet sunrise over the alien landscape. Even though the story had brought back some of the pain, it had helped to tell it, for the first time in fifteen years. And the memories, some of them, were very pleasant.

He was safe with Saavik. She would never tell anyone, least of all Amanda, the one person who could really never know.

"Hello," said a voice.

McCoy started, turning to see Amanda of Vulcan standing in the kitchen doorway. This wasn't his Mandy, this was the woman he had first met on the Enterprise and had to pretend with now for years. She smiled at him. That smile... a chill went down McCoy's spine.

She shrugged, and a half-smile came to her face... *she knew*. "I guess the Guardian didn't do its job very well, did it? Your story should have just sounded like... I don't know, a lie? But it didn't."

He cursed himself. What a fool he'd been! How could he have given in and told? Here, of all places?

Amanda must have seen the pain and self-recrimination in his eyes. She came forward and took his hand gently, stroking it. "I came to see who was awake, and I heard you telling Saavik; and everything came back to me. I know it wasn't a lie. You're not a very capable liar, Leonard. I didn't believe you that day you left, telling me you were running away. I don't know why -- "

"Lady Amanda -- " he began.

"Don't be formal, Len. It's back. What we felt may be over... but it happened. Sixty years ago."

McCoy smiled. "Fifteen years ago."

Amanda laughed and came toward him, taking his hand. "And now you're older, and I'm just old."

"I wouldn't say that." He grinned.

"It doesn't bother me, really. I've had a good life, and there's still a bit left of it. And I have a lot of good memories..." She squeezed his hand and smiled at him in the half light. "A few more, after tonight. I'm glad I heard, Leonard. As you said, our memories are important, and I'm glad mine are back." She kissed him on the cheek and hugged his neck with one arm.

"Thank you, Leonard. And don't worry, it'll be our little secret."





WHALESONG

by Sandy Zier

"Where in the world have you two been? We've all been worried about you."

"You might say we lost track of time."

"Well, you could have at least called. It's been a long time. We thought something terrible may have happened."

"We really aren't sure exactly what did happen. All we know is that we were here, then we weren't. But here we are again. Something tried to tell us it was going to help us help it. It seemed to be an intelligent being — but it did have to touch us to communicate. We'd like to get to know this being better. Anyway — what's the big deal? So we haven't spoken for a couple of days — we can get along without you for a while."

"A WHILE?! We've been trying to contact you for over 200 earth years."

"That's not possible. We've been here, except when we were with those beings."

"Well, there's obviously a mystery here to be solved... but at least you are safe. We will take care of worrying about this time discrepancy. Any messages you'd like us to carry back?"

Well, you can tell everyone we're fine... and we look forward to seeing them when it's our time.

Is that all?

Well, you may want to mention that Gracie is pregnant.

Post



Transcendance



story by Martha J. Bonds

art by Jan Davies

James Kirk leaned back in the center seat and sighed. He took a long, searching look at the starfield and marveled that it seemed so peaceful, so undisturbed, despite the recent, narrowly-avoided disaster.

Inside he was a mass of conflicting emotions. He felt justifiably proud of what he had done; once again it seemed he had managed to find the right answers to solve seemingly unsolvable problems. His ship and his crew, as well as the population of Earth were safe, and V'Ger... ? V'Ger had Wil and Iliya. Kirk still felt awed by what he had seen, the transcendence, the merging of human and machine, the merging of emotion and intellect.

Emotion and intellect. Behind him, Kirk knew Spock was at work at his station. The Vulcan had lapsed into silence since the mission's completion, speaking only when necessary to discuss the functioning of the ship. Kirk realized Spock must be exhausted after the harrowing events in which he had participated, but the Human realized too that something else might be causing the lack of conversation.

After the communication that had passed between them in Sickbay -- the first real communication they had shared in three years -- Kirk had believed they could fall back into their old familiar roles. Now, he felt a rising uncertainty. They had reached out, touched and understood each other. Spock had made strides in becoming a healed person, yet Kirk was not entirely sure the closeness could be maintained. The old sense of familiarity was there, but there was a strange newness, as if he had never really known Spock at all, pervading him as well.

Considering the Enterprise, even there Kirk was experiencing more differences than he had been quite prepared for. So much was altered. The Enterprise was newer, brighter, better, but like a freshly redecorated apartment, it didn't feel quite lived-in yet, not quite like the home he remembered.

Still, there had been that first sight of her. Brilliantly beautiful against the backdrop of night, she had appeared, seemingly waiting for him to command her again. And he had answered the call -- that at least was still the same.

This bridge, though -- he couldn't *see* Spock, couldn't watch for the subtle signs he had learned long ago to read. Then, again came the doubts -- *can I still read him?*

Kirk stood up, stretching and surreptitiously glancing at the Vulcan Science Officer whose attention was on the computer readout at his station. There was a suggestion of fatigue in the way he moved and Kirk decided both he and Spock had earned a break.

The Enterprise, having begun her 'proper shakedown' at last, was in capable hands with Sulu at the helm and Scott in engineering. The duty shift was almost over and Kirk realized that during the last three days he had been pushed to the limits of his resources.

"You have the con, Commander," he told Uhura as he turned toward the turbolift. He paused a moment beside Spock's station, about to request the Vulcan to accompany him, but no words were necessary. Spock gazed up at him and arose, following his Captain into the lift.

"Deck five," Kirk told the elevator as the doors closed. Still feeling a bit awkward with Spock, he remarked conversationally, "It's been quite a day."

"Indeed." The Vulcan sounded solemn.

Kirk glanced at him. The one-word answer seemed a typically non-committal response and for a moment the Admiral wondered if he had only imagined the progress he thought they had made that day in understanding each other again.

Before he could say anything, or speculate further, Spock swayed and reached out awkwardly for the wall railing.

"Spock?" Kirk spoke anxiously and placed a supportive touch at his friend's elbow.

The Vulcan blinked. "I seem," he began haltingly, "to be experiencing a sudden... fatigue."

"Fatigue?" Kirk shook his head at the understatement. "You're exhausted."

The lift slowed, changed direction from vertical to lateral and the movement unbalanced Spock. He staggered and Kirk caught him around the waist. When the doors opened, Spock attempted to pull away.

"Forgive me... I... am not myself. Such a display... "

"Spock." There was command in the tone, although Kirk felt concerned. Spock had been conditioned against displaying weakness on Vulcan, but that didn't matter here. He had thought, when he saw Spock's tears on the bridge, that his friend realized that. "Spock," he repeated, more gently this time, "it's all right."

The Vulcan met his eyes with a searching look and with relief Kirk saw the distance, the barriers fade. "Come on," he urged. "It's time you got some rest."

He led the now-unprotesting man down the corridor and directly to his quarters. The door opened to reveal the redesigned interior, as empty of personal decorations as was Kirk's own cabin. Spock sat on the orange contour-lounger, while Kirk walked over to the servo-computer in the office area.

"Are you hungry?" he asked, glancing over the array of buttons and available food stuffs. "I'll get something for you while you change."

"Negative." There was a pause, then Spock looked up, his voice softening. "But get something for yourself, if you'd like."

Kirk watched as the Vulcan hesitated, then dialed for a leisure robe. His movements were controlled, but careful, as if he were about to collapse from exhaustion and was attempting to delay the inevitable. As he began to change from the regulation jumpsuit, Kirk turned to order a hot drink for both of them. From the corner of his eye, he caught just a glimpse of Spock's back as he undressed. The skin was darkened by the Vulcan sun, burnished to deep bronze, and there were small, irregular marks and lines across his shoulders, the nature and causes of which Kirk did not want to consider.

When two steaming mugs arrived, Kirk carried them to the lounge area and sat beside Spock. The Vulcan had grown quiet again, but his silence was more contemplative, not the aloof attitude he had maintained before the encounter with V'Ger.

"All this new decor is going to take some getting used to," Kirk said. He glanced at the bare walls and empty shelves. "Scotty said we could get to Vulcan in four days. If you want, we could drop by to pick up your things."

Spock looked over at him, his eyes shadowed, reflecting his fatigue. "My... things? No, Jim. There is nothing on Vulcan that is mine."

"But what about your mementoes, your possessions? The fire-pot?" Kirk did not understand.

"They are mine no longer. As part of the Kolinahr... I gave them up."

Kirk swallowed. "Are they stored, perhaps? At your father's house?"

Spock shook his head. "Gone. Destroyed. I have no... personal possessions. One must have no emotional attachments to inanimate objects."

"Or to anything else." Kirk's voice took on a bitter tone, all his frustration coming through. "Why did you do it, Spock?" Then, seeing subtle agony in the Vulcan's face, he amended, "No, forget I said that. I shouldn't ask. You had your reasons."

"Which I tried to explain," Spock interrupted softly.

"Yes," Kirk nodded. "Yes, I suppose in your own way you did try. But I was too preoccupied... and maybe too Human... to understand."



Spock started to reach a hand toward Kirk, then stopped. "There was misunderstanding on both our parts. You are not to blame for not understanding what I myself did not fully comprehend. And I... "

"I know, Spock," Kirk said. "With everything else, whatever mistakes were made, or however we got side-tracked, what I still don't understand is how. How did we miss hearing each other?"

For a long moment, the two locked gazes. Kirk felt he could see deeply into the soul of the man seated beside him. Then Spock touched his arm in a firm, unhesitant gesture. "It is difficult to speak of these things," he began. "Perhaps it is because we are too... close to the feelings they evoke at this time. One day, we may be able to speak of this time... and the years we were apart."

"That's all in the past now, Spock," Kirk agreed, quietly emphatic. He wanted only to forget the mistakes, to go on, to know they *could* go on.

He remembered the way Spock had looked when he first stepped on the bridge -- distant, cold, alien, saying nothing but speaking eloquent volumes through his pain-filled eyes. Those eyes had betrayed him. The serenity, the answers he had sought had not been achieved on Gol. Kirk had known it immediately, and that Spock had paid a high price in attempting to find them. His face had been haggard, his body tense. Even now, after the healing influence of realizing that he and V'Ger had been seeking the same thing, he looked tired and vulnerable. The Admiral wondered if he would ever know precisely what Spock's life had been like during the time they had been apart.

"You've been through a lot," he said finally.

Spock met his gaze steadily. "You have also suffered... emotionally."

Kirk didn't want to reflect on his own troubled time. It was difficult enough sorting out his current feelings. "I'm all right now, Spock. Believe that."

"I do." His voice was solemn, sincere. "And so am I." He sipped slowly from his cup.

Kirk noticed the tremor in his hands and took the mug away from Spock. For his own sake as much as his friend's, he tried to lighten the mood, but his words sounded forced instead of confident. "Here I am talking to you instead of letting you rest. Are you sure you're okay? Maybe I should call Bones. I did get you out of Sickbay." It was almost as if he feared their reunion was not real, that if they examined their feelings too closely, if they said the wrong thing, the bubble would burst.

Spock dispelled his concern. "It was not the first time you required my presence on the bridge when I was in Sickbay." A tolerant smile was evident in his voice. "And I trust it will not be the last."

Kirk grimaced, then chuckled. "I'll remember you said that. Wait a minute -- I know you. You're trying to get me off the subject of your health."

"I'm fine."

Kirk gave Spock his best 'I don't believe you' look, and the Vulcan sighed.

"I am fatigued. I am experiencing some muscle tension in my shoulders and neck and a slight headache." He enumerated his symptoms in a monotone.

The Admiral wanted to ask incredulously, 'That's all After all you've been through since you arrived on board?' Then, somewhat guiltily, he realized that the privations and disciplines of the Kolinahr had probably prepared Spock to endure much worse. And even the old Spock, his old, familiar friend, wouldn't admit to more, anyway.

"There are techniques for alleviating tension and fatigue," the Vulcan was saying, sounding as if he were about to give Kirk a lesson in Kolinahr discipline on the spot.

"Forget it," Kirk told him, still trying to find a measure of their old banter. "I have my own techniques. Turn around."

Spock looked at him skeptically, but obeyed. He sat cross-legged on the lounge, his back to Kirk. The Admiral placed his hands on Spock's shoulders, feeling the hard knots of muscle through the thin material of his robe. He massaged gently at first, then as Spock began to relax, he kneaded with more pressure. He kept on, knowing his touch was comforting as well as easing the strained muscles, and he allowed himself to be lulled into the mellow mood being created, glad that they could be this close, that the emotional and physical distance between them was bridged at last.

Spock sighed. His eyelids drooped drowsily as Kirk's fingers massaged the nape of his neck and smoothed his hair. Then, they both leaned back, stretching out side by side, half-reclining. They were quiet a few moments as they finished their drinks.

Kirk was turning the final events of the day over in his mind. "It's hard to believe we actually were a part of what happened," he mused.

"Comprehending something as overwhelming as the joining of man and machine to create a new life form is difficult."

"I didn't think Decker had it in him."

"What?" Spock turned to peer more closely at his friend.

"At first I didn't know quite what to make of him. Bones said I was the one who was competing and maybe..." He paused, groping for words. "Decker seemed too hesitant, too unsure of himself. You heard him: 'Use the screens, be careful, don't take unwarranted chances.' If I'd been like that... I probably wouldn't be here now." He grimaced at his choice of words. "Anyway, I didn't think he'd take the chance he did... out there."

"You didn't think he was strong enough?" Spock prompted.

Kirk thought over the question. "No, I guess I didn't. He didn't seem ... committed enough. But when he found out what he wanted, he went for it all the way. 'As much as I wanted the Enterprise,' he said. I don't know, Spock. Am I really just trying to recapture old glory by taking command of the ship?"

"Jim. Wil Decker found his destiny today. Just as his father did, years ago, he made up for some wrong decisions and a lack of strength at a time when it counted. That was his destiny, but he could not have achieved it without you."

"You mean, I chauffeured him out here to meet his fate?" Kirk asked ruefully.

Spock chose to ignore the self-deprecating tone in Kirk's voice. "Perhaps he learned something from you along the way. And your destiny, Jim, is this ship."

"I have her back. For good this time." Kirk couldn't help smiling broadly.

Spock nodded and a warmth suffused Kirk; he was at peace, body and mind. He was home. All the questions and doubts seemed to be resolved. "And what about you, my friend?" he asked. "Are you sure...?"

"That I have all my answers?" Spock's voice was rich, soft. "No, Jim. Needs, emotions... those are things I still do not fully understand. Even logic..." His voice trailed off. "But here, I can experience... and learn."

"I couldn't believe it when you walked on the bridge," Kirk smiled. "And then when you said the Intruder had contacted you... I didn't know what to think, it was so hard to talk to you. Spock, what if I hadn't been aboard this ship? Would you have..."

"But you were here, Jim, as I knew you would be. I *was* called."

"*Your* destiny?"

Spock's only answer was a raised eyebrow and the ghost of a smile.

Kirk reached out, clasping Spock's hands in his. The Vulcan returned a steady pressure and met his eyes. All the moments they had shared aboard this ship so long ago coalesced around them and Kirk saw Spock's eyes shine with the same emotion the Human was experiencing. The look carried understanding, hope and deep affection. They were one, together, transcending the barriers of space and time, as uniquely joined as were Decker and Ilia and the consciousness that had been V'Ger.

Kirk released Spock's hands, his arms going around the Vulcan's shoulders, pulling him close, feeling he had to hold the man who was so much a part of his life, of himself. Spock's arms echoed his Captain's gesture, the embrace tightening. They held each other, years melting away, questions fading.

Finally, Kirk let go and stood up. "It's time I let you get some sleep."

"What about you?" Spock's tone was solicitous.

"What about you?" Spock's tone was solicitous.

Kirk sighed. "I'm tired, but I'm too keyed up to go to my quarters just yet. Maybe I'll go find Bones. I seem to have noticed his mood has improved -- now that the galaxy is safe."

Spock stretched out, looking as if he enjoyed the comfort of the padded lounge. His voice was sleepy as he replied, "It seems to me the doctor's spirits began to improve somewhat before the denouement."

Kirk did not quite follow him, but it did not appear that Spock would explain further. He was already asleep.

The Captain of the Enterprise was smiling as he made his way to Sickbay.



If This Be Dreams



*If I am dreaming, never
let me wake
For all this long voyage
through pain and death
I have dreamt of you
and coming home.*



*You have sustained me
and held me fast
Against the night and
all its fears
Though grief and doubt
assailed me.*



*And now it seems that
you are here
Beside me as though
you had never gone
And we shall voyage among
the stars once more.*



*If I am dreaming, never
let me wake.*

Lynn Syck

When Pigs Fly



by Cheryl Bobbitt

Kirk awoke, startled. It was raining outside *like cats and dogs*. He smiled. Yes, now he remembered. Besides the "colorful metaphors" he had continued to use since returning from 1986 Earth, he had also managed to add some old similes, metaphors, and idioms. Oh well, *no sense crying over spilled milk*. He got out of bed still feeling tired from all the debriefings of the last few days. He was feeling *the weight of the world on his shoulders*. Damn. He did it again.

Well, he wasn't alone in this quandary. Everyone seemed to be affected, except for Spock. Since his return, Spock had stopped using any old Earth language. When the crew had used the old expressions, Spock had corrected them immediately. This task alone kept him pretty busy these last few weeks.

As Kirk reached for the shower controls, he thought back to the dinner he had shared with Bones a week ago at a nearby restaurant. Bones had complained all evening about the service. He had told the waiter he was *slow as molasses* and asked him to *get the lead out*. As they had been leaving, Bones had called over the manager and *chewed his ear off* about the service. He had told him it would be *a cold day in hell* before he ever returned. When Kirk suggested that Bones had went a little too far, the good doctor turned around and said, *'so, sue me.'*

Uhura wasn't acting any better. In fact, all of them acted like they were *going off the deep end*. It was the day after the restaurant incident with Bones that Kirk was standing outside of Headquarters when Uhura rounded the corner in a Trans Am Air, offering him a ride. Kirk thanked her and got in. When Kirk mentioned that she was driving *like a bat out of hell*, she told him she didn't need anybody to *rain on her parade*. Kirk responded politely, saying he mentioned it only because she might not have been aware of her speed. "I'm speeding?" Uhura had asked with mock surprise. "*No kidding, Dick Tracy.*"

By the time they got to Kirk's quarters, Uhura had further suggested that he was acting like he was *over the hill* and that he had a *bug up his ass*. *Go figure*. He just never knew she was *hell on wheels*.

Kirk stepped out of the shower and got dressed. Like a *bolt out of the blue*, he remembered the brief conversation he had with Scotty recently. Scotty said he was at the *end of his rope* trying to refit the new Enterprise to pass inspection with *flying colors*. Kirk was dismayed to hear the stress in Scotty's voice and told him to *get a grip on himself*. Scotty proceeded to ramble about Admiral Ciarapica who would inspect the ship with a *fine tooth comb*. He recounted the problems from the last few days, claiming from time to time how he was *batting a thousand*, feeling *behind the eight ball*, and being *nailed to the wall*. Kirk sensed Scotty was *coming apart at the*

seams and needed to be handled with kid gloves. By the end of the conversation, the Engineer was shouting that the Enterprise, Starfleet, Admiral Ciarapica, in fact the whole kit and kaboodle, could take a hike. Kirk could see the handwriting on the wall. He wasn't getting anywhere with Scotty, so he suggested they put two and two together and meet about the situation. Scotty agreed but said Kirk would be wasting his breath and would have trouble keeping his head above water.

Kirk looked at the time. Spock would be here any minute. He had called Spock immediately after talking with Scotty. Perhaps Spock could explain everything. Had everyone involved in the time warp been affected? At first Kirk hadn't thought so. Look at what happened yesterday. He had entered the Officer's Lounge for a drink and met Sulu and Chekov. He could tell Sulu had completely enjoyed old Earth culture, referring to the mission as a *wild goose chase*. He had enjoyed *shooting the breeze* with the helicopter pilot and *pounding the pavement* with McCoy and Scotty looking for transparent aluminum. He didn't really think they would *get to first base*. But, once they *got down to brass tacks* and *took the bull by the horns*, they were successful. Kirk kept waiting for Chekov to speak so he could tell if Chekov's vocabulary was equally infused with the old Earth idioms and metaphors. After twenty minutes of conversation, he couldn't hear any differences in Chekov's speech. His speech patterns were definitely pure 23rd Century. Perhaps Chekov wasn't affected. But why would he be different?

Kirk didn't know what to think about the situation. So he decided to have another drink. Sulu said that he and Chekov had to leave, but they would *pick up the tab*. Kirk heard a scuffle and looked up. At the door, there were two men fighting as Sulu and Chekov hurried across the room to intervene. As the security guards took away the two fighters, Chekov yelled above the noise, *'Book him, Danno!'* Well, Kirk thought to himself, I'll be a monkey's uncle! He finished his drink and left.

Kirk shook his head as he recalled the incident. He heard the faint signal from the front door. It must be Spock, he concluded. As he answered the door, he decided to *lay his cards on the table* with Spock.

"Good afternoon, Captain," Spock said.

"Good afternoon, Spock. Let's get to this meeting," Kirk responded, as he moved down the hall.

"Is something wrong, Captain? You appear to be agitated."

"Spock, have you noticed a certain degree of annoyance on the part of Dr. McCoy since we returned from our mission?"

"Dr. McCoy has always suffered from an overindulgence of irritability."

"How about Scotty? Has he been a little disoriented?"

"Mr. Scott has demonstrated in numerous past occurrences a degree of excessive excitability."

"Well, what about Chekov?"

"If Chekov is behaving any differently, it must be attributed to the injury he sustained on our mission."

"And Sulu?"

"Mr. Sulu has always had a flair for the dramatic, and is fully capable of being somewhat volatile."

"All right. Maybe it's me, then. But, one more thing, Spock. Have you ever accepted a ride from Uhura?"

One eyebrow lifted significantly. *"When pigs fly, Captain."*



STARS

Casting friendly shadows on one so close to me,
You must be friends of mine.
You are a constant source of wonder
My heart would feel empty without you.
Your warmth spreading to my soul
Is a source of inspiration.
I find courage in you and so does he.
Thoughts become clear.
Heart, soul, body and mind are one.
You have drawn us together, and given us destiny.

You shed the light, so that he may lead souls
Out of the darkness, and into the light of
humanity.

Mary Mills

The New Generation

Beverly Volker

They call it Star Trek
A proud name
A name that lives in legend
A name that evokes loyalty - and passion
But, what is in a name?
Does it love, does it feel?
Has it endured two decades
Of camaraderie,
Shared triumphs and tragedies,
Worn the same familiar faces
And sparkled with a magical chemistry?
Has it lived?

They call her Enterprise
The fifth to wear that name
She is refined, a technological miracle
She is aesthetically beautiful - and strange
For, what is a starship?
Has it sheltered, has it nurtured?
Has it become the home
Of lifelong companions,
Offered a haven of safety and security
To a daring, heroic crew
And breathed with a soul of her own?
Has she lived?

It will come again
Return to its origin
It will once more boldly go
Where it has gone before
It has sought out a new crew and new officers
They will call it Star Trek and Enterprise --
But, what is in a name?

The Natural Order of Things



story by Deborah Cummins

art by Maggie Manlove

The shuttlecraft moved forward with dogged persistence, its pace agonizingly slow in comparison with the Enterprise. James Kirk sat back in the command chair, looking out of the viewer before him. He watched the stars that never seemed to move as the Columbus chugged along through the void. Drumming his fingers along the arm of his chair, he cast a quick glance to one side.

Spock was watching the stars with great intensity. He seemed totally immersed in his observations and oblivious to the Captain's impatience. "We will rendezvous with the Enterprise in eight hours and twenty-three minutes, Captain." He spoke the words without looking over.

Kirk repressed a smile. "Is it that obvious?"

Spock did not turn to him at the comment, but Kirk could read the amusement in his eyes. "It has been an uneventful trip."

Kirk's smile broadened. "Uneventful? It's been downright boring. But," he tried to put some enthusiasm into his voice, "at least it was successful. Tiglath signed that trading agreement."

Sitting there, piloting the vessel through parsecs of space, Kirk thought back to the mission that had brought them to Beta Orioni, a moderately sized world of great strategic importance. Lying perilously close to Klingon-dominated space, the Federation had long wanted to establish a trading port there, but had been rebuffed on its one previous attempt to make contact. Then, a month before, a zealous bureaucrat squirreled away among the mazes of Starfleet Command Headquarters learned that the Captain of the Enterprise had, many years before, visited Beta Orioni in connection with a mapping survey. While on the planet, the young ensign had formed a friendship with an Orioni youth who also happened to be a member of the royal family. They had even corresponded for a short time after the meeting, the communications gradually falling off as the two men went their separate ways. Now, twenty years later, that same Orioni was the newly-crowned ruler of the largest nation on his world, the natural hub of the entire planet's economy and the logical locus for setting up a trading enclave. The pleasant, naive youth of the past had matured into a crafty, calculating politician. He rose to the position of ruler of Beta Orioni after vanquishing the

claims of several older siblings and his experiences had hardened him into a very tough negotiator. And he was showing interest in re-establishing contacts with the Federation.

The sought-after trade agreement was seen as the first step toward full diplomatic recognition and Starfleet was quick to see that a meeting with an old friend from the new King's relatively innocent past could provide a more conducive atmosphere for negotiations.

The Enterprise, her hold filled with grain destined for a planetoid of starving settlers, could not be diverted and the Columbus was called upon to transport the Captain and his First Officer to Beta Orioni. Kirk's old friend, now bearing the grand name of Tiglath-Pileser III, has professed delight at seeing him again, although in truth Tiglath had seemed more interested in the taciturn Vulcan who always stood at his side. Thinking of their planetside stay, the Captain's mind replayed the feast that the king had laid out for them on their first night. He grimaced at the memory. Spock saw the expression and gave him a curious look. "I was thinking about the talipazin, Mr. Spock."

The Vulcan's face paled as he too remembered the incident.

Kirk watched him, sorry that he had brought it up. "They considered it a great delicacy. Tiglath took a great liking to you to have offered it. It was a sign of great regard."

Spock nodded. "I realized that, Captain. I am indebted to you for successfully extricating me from a most unpleasant situation."

Kirk smiled at the Vulcan's thanks although the actual incident had not been amusing at all. Tiglath had shown Kirk the deference due to one of his high rank, but the king's fascination with Spock was apparent to everyone. At the feast, Tiglath had graciously asked Kirk if the Captain would allow him to pay Spock a singular honor usually reserved for one of Kirk's status. Not wishing to offend, the Captain had agreed. Tiglath seemed delighted with the breach of etiquette and, waving a jewelled arm in the air, signalled for the tray to be brought forth. Kirk would never forget the distraught expression that flashed across Spock's face for a moment as the dozen eyeballs, rolling and spinning wildly across the surface of the plate, had been placed before him. He could not possibly have eaten the horrid things and Kirk, looking into Tiglath's expectant eyes, realized instantly the danger to his friend at a refusal. And so he had spun the tale, explaining in great detail the symbolism of the eye in Vulcan mysticism. The words had come to him with remarkable ease as he embroidered the story into a complex weave of Vulcan mysticism, iconography, religion and morality. Tiglath seemed convinced and the plate had been taken away to the Vulcan's visible relief.

"Captain." Spock's eyes narrowed as he studied his board. "A vessel approaching, Sir."

Kirk aligned his viewer, thoughts of Beta Orioni gone from his mind. "What type of ship is it, Spock?"

The Vulcan did not answer for a moment. His fingers ran across the monitor before him. "A pleasure craft, Captain. Class type 14-B, of Durin configuration."

"Durin? That system is less than three parsecs from here. But they're still a long way out for a pleasure cruise."

"Durinians do have a reputation for wandering far from home, Captain. There are many on the planet that derive a peculiar sense of accomplishment with these long, rather pointless pleasure excursions. A profligate waste of resources on a planet known to house some of the worst slums in the sector."

Kirk continued to study his panel. "Her course is steady and even. Better give her a wide berth, just in case."

The Durinian ship had gained ground on them very rapidly as they spoke. They could see her clearly now. A long, silver vessel, easily three times the size of the Columbus. Bright red and golden designs were splashed across her flanks. Sleek and streamlined, the ship was a work of art.

Kirk watched, his fascination at the sight of such a lovely vessel evident on his face. He flipped open the communicator channel. "This is the Starfleet shuttlecraft Columbus hailing unidentified Durinian vessel."

For a moment, silence and static popped from the channel. Then a voice, thick and wavering, answered. "Starfleet executives travelling in the lap of luxury." Heavy, coarse laughter followed the words. A dull thud cut into the unseen speaker's amusement and the voice broke off as the Durinian communicator hit the floor. Sounds of someone fumbling with the device, then a different voice, lower, deeper, came over the speaker. "I haven't seen a ship that ugly in ages. Thought Starfleet always got the best of everything." The words slurred and ran together. Then the voice stopped, replaced by the unmistakable sound of liquid sloshing in a container. A loud belch and the voice was back again. "We were getting bored. Let's play some games." The laughter returned. Kirk and Spock exchanged glances.

Suddenly, within the space of a second, the Durinian ship veered off and charged straight for the Columbus. Kirk twisted the navigation controls as the shuttlecraft jerked to one side and dove below the larger vessel. Beside him, Spock quietly began broadcasting a distress beam.

"Hold on. Here she comes!"

Again the huge ship swooped down on them, peeling away a second before impact. It weaved an erratic course as it navigated to turn once again to face the shuttlecraft. Coming at them with awesome speed, the silver vessel dove again. This time, it didn't break off fast enough and a piece of its tail section struck the Columbus' hull. The impact sent the ship listing sharply to port. Kirk, sitting on the left side, fell against his chair, but managed to retain his seat. Spock was thrown against the ceiling. The force of the blow cut a deep gash in his forehead and he fell heavily at the Captain's feet.

Kirk fought the controls and managed to stabilize the tiny ship back to an upright position. Sparks began to fly as the navigational controls shorted out. The ominous hissing sounds told them that there was atmospheric leakage.

Kirk reached down to Spock, his eyes on the monitors as the Durinian vessel, apparently tiring of its game, gracefully arched away and disappeared with surprising speed. His eyes flew to the panel before him, taking in at one glance the extent of the damage. The flashing emergency lights illuminated the navigational panel like a Christmas tree. The loud buzz of environmental alarms alerted him unnecessarily to the oxygen that was slowly dissipating through the tear in the outer hull. Kirk studied the monitor. At the rate that they were losing oxygen, they would be dead before the Enterprise responded to the distress beacon Spock had sent, assuming that the ship received it at all.

He pulled Spock to his knees. Tearing his gaze from the panel, he examined the Vulcan's head wound. "It's a deep cut. I'd better seal it." Reaching behind him, he pulled out the emergency medical kit and peeled off a sealer, applying it carefully to the wound. Spock flinched at the touch.

"Sorry." Kirk spoke the word through lips that barely moved. "When I find out who was piloting that vessel, I'll have him drawn and quartered."

The bleeding had stopped. Spock struggled toward his chair and studied the panels before him. "Captain. We must land this vessel within... 43 minutes or we will run out of breathable atmosphere."

Kirk noted the hesitation, but said nothing. "Is there a class M planet in this system?"

"Yes, Captain. Delta Draconis. The fourth planet out, thirty-seven million kilometers from here." He looked over at Kirk.

The Captain met his gaze. "Thirty-seven million kilometers. Can we make it?"

"Possible. However, we must restore more navigational control." He stood, balancing himself on the panel for a moment.

"Spock?"

The Vulcan held his hand up. "I am all right, Captain." Crawling below the panel before him, Spock studied the extent of the damage. After a moment, he poked his head out. "We have enough navigational control to take the ship in a direct line to planet four of this system."

"Do we have enough to soft land?"

Spock's expression was grim. "Unknown."

Kirk nodded slowly. "We have no choice. We'll asphyxiate before the Enterprise shows up." He plotted the course and eased the damaged craft in the desired direction. The planet glittered before them, a bright blue dot shining like a magnitude one star in the void.

"What about the distress beam? Are you able to broadcast?"

Spock rose to his knees and studied the panel again. "My communications console is completely dead, Captain. However, I was able to transmit a complete

message before we were struck by the Durinian vessel. If the signal is picked up, it will be possible to trace the source of the beam back to our present location. As the only Class M planet in this system, Delta Draconis will then be the most logical place to investigate."

The lines around Kirk's mouth deepened. He set the controls on automatic and crawled down into the cramped space below, pushing his back against the metal to keep out of Spock's way. Reaching out without a word, he twisted the wires, holding them steady while the Vulcan attempted to repair the enormous damage. "Whoever was piloting that Durinian vessel was capable of executing some very complex maneuvers." His eyes flashed over to Spock. "A drunken pilot wouldn't have been capable of doing that."

Spock continued to work. "Agreed."

Kirk thought in silence for a moment. "They rammed us deliberately." His voice was low.

"It would seem so." A bright spark erupted from the wiring in Kirk's hand and Spock pulled it away, shorting it out on the panel over his head.

Kirk's thoughts were racing as his mind pondered the implications. "Durinians are notorious for drinking, drugs, wild behavior. It would serve as a good cover in case their victims had the misfortune to survive and press charges."

"And the Klingons have been known to pay bounty on any Federation vessel destroyed by mercenaries."

Kirk nodded grimly. "Then they probably had a transmission scrambler on board to block our beam."

"Undoubtedly."

"Well, that takes care of the distress call. If we're found, it will have to be by the Enterprise or another Federation vessel that knows we're out here." He paused for a moment. "Scotty will begin his search in approximately twelve hours. There are nine star systems between here and where we were to rendezvous and we passed twelve before we were hit. Without your beam and no debris, Scotty will have a difficult time knowing where to look for us."

"It is remotely possible that ship's sensors will pick up the atmospheric leakage."

Kirk looked over at him. "If there's been enough to lay down a trail."

Spock's eyes flashed from the wires in his hands to study the Captain's face. "Yes."

Kirk turned back to the shattered panel above his head. "What are our chances for a soft landing?"

Spock's hands hesitated for a fraction of a second. "Very poor, Jim."

Their eyes met for a moment. Then they turned back to their repairs.

The pilot of the Durinian vessel leaned casually against the back of his command chair. Unlike the long and willowy Durinian people, he was short and squat. His hands were dirty, his beard hung in uneven lengths across his chin. There was something repulsive about him, but he had one quality of which he was inordinately proud. He did not drink. He had never been drunk in his life and now, as he watched the tiny shuttlecraft sputter away, he was stone cold sober. He smiled through yellowed teeth. "Send the hologram to K'laithin on subspace channel 7. A shuttlecraft ain't much, but it's got the Starfleet markings and that's all we need to collect our money." He studied the representation on the cube before him, squinting his eyes to make out the call numbers. "What's it say... NCE-1701?"

"NCC-1701." The wiry man at his side leaned over and peered at the markings.

He snorted. "Don't mean nothing to me one way or the other. They all look the same to me, NCE, NCC, who cares which." He laughed. "The Klingons don't care. It's the body count they's concerned with." He turned to his companion. "We won't get much for shooting down a shuttlecraft, but it'll be enough to buy us a couple of ladies for the night, eh, Gurahmi?"

He laughed. After a moment of uneasy silence, his companion joined in and laughed with him.

The planet grew larger with frightening speed. The repairs were completed, although both men knew how woefully inadequate the work had been. They had restored some steering and braking power but, in the ship's weakened condition, their unstable re-entry orbit would probably short out those tenuous repairs. How much would be left once they entered planetary atmosphere was unknown. Kirk had no illusions about their chances.

"We will enter outer atmosphere in thirty-seven seconds, Captain." Spock reported without inflection. His eyes were locked on the panel before him.

Kirk looked over at him sadly. "I'm sorry, Spock. I shouldn't have taken you along."

The Vulcan tore his gaze away to give the Captain a look of total astonishment.

Kirk's eyes grew soft. "You *would* rather be here, wouldn't you?"

A faint smile touched the corners of Spock's mouth. "Of course, Jim."

Spock reached up and lowered the viewer shields. "Entering atmosphere in eighteen point three seconds."

Kirk nodded and turned back to his panel, adjusting several dials at once. "Mr. Spock?"

The Vulcan did not look away from his instruments.

"Thank you."

Spock continued to work his panel, but the smile became more pronounced. "Any time, Captain."

The dials before them recorded the temperature on the ship's hull as the molecular friction singed the exterior. The vessel began to rock, bucking with increasing violence as the disrupted navigation controls popped and shorted in a futile attempt to level out the chaotic entry.

"Entering upper stratosphere in seventeen point three seconds." Spock reached out, his fingers resting lightly on the viewer control, waiting calmly until the ship reached a safe altitude. When his mind kicked in the proper figures, he flipped the dial and the protective shield slid to one side, giving them a clear view of the planet below.

"I read a plain one hundred and forty-three kilometers to the north-north-west." Kirk shot Spock a glance before turning back to his board. "Can we make it?"

The ship canted sharply to one side. Several seconds later, the two men had wrestled the vehicle back to an upright position.

"Negative, Captain." Spock's voice was slightly louder than necessary. "We will impact in thirty-eight seconds."

The ground was coming up on them with terrifying speed. The peculiar weightlessness of free-fall was something neither of them had experienced since training days at the Academy and it disoriented them both for an instant.

With effort, Kirk raised his arm. "A river valley. It's our best bet."

"Agreed, Captain." Spock's face was pale.

The valley undulated, the land rippling gracefully in a series of gentle inclines and depressions. Periodic copses dotted the open expanse, clustering in a line along the riverbanks. It was a poor spot for a forced landing, but, casting a cursory glance at the mountainous terrain surrounding it, Kirk gritted his teeth and prepared for the worst.

The navigation controls grew increasingly unresponsive. With great difficulty, they pointed the ship on a parallel course to the river. The shuttlecraft was dropping on a nearly vertical line now, moving forward only by the forces of inertia. Buffeted by the wind, the Columbus swayed from one side of the riverbank to the other. Controlling the direction was virtually impossible. The ground came closer. It was becoming possible to make out individual trees.

"Spock, we have to get her to the west!"

The Vulcan worked the controls. The ship edged toward the marsh grass, waving in a graceful pattern below them. Studded through the grass were clusters of trees. A large stand appeared suddenly before them.

"Damn it!" Kirk twisted the dials and the ship missed them by less than its own length. "Can we brake any more?" His voice was loud over the roar of the wind.

"Negative!" Spock was shouting now.

The ship nosed down. The ground was close enough that Kirk could see the flower heads, bending the tall stalks of the marsh grass by their fertile weight. He turned toward Spock and saw the Vulcan looking at him. He smiled and Spock gravely nodded his head in reply. A split-second later, the ship plunged into the earth.

The humanoid crept cautiously forward. It had taken her a full two hours to traverse the fifty feet separating the tree grove from the strange being lying in the grass. But the creature had not moved. He lay as still as death itself but still his presence frightened her. Several times she had nearly fled, but her curiosity overshadowed her fear and she stayed. The streak overhead as the strange vessel fell from the sky had summoned her from miles away and she had run like a deer to the site of the impact. She saw him almost immediately and now, finally, she was only inches away. Reaching out a tentative hand, her fingers gently felt the skin, brushed strands of the sandy hair against her palm. At the touch, the creature stirred. Uttering a soft cry of surprise and fear, she pulled her hand away and fled, stopping for a moment at the trees to look back. He was alive. She could see now that he was alive. There was movement in the body. A great fright filled her and she turned and fled into the hills. This time she did not look back.

The smell of rich, moist earth was the first thing he sensed, the first awareness that crept back into the blackness of his thoughts. He tried to move, feeling the soft, natural blanket beneath him, opening and closing his hands over the green carpet that had cushioned his fall. He opened his eyes, then closed them again as the oblique rays of the rising sun penetrated his pupils. The glare seemed to reach directly into his brain and he lay silently, his hands stretched over his head, fingers twining the soft lengths of grass that wound around them like yarn.

Two minutes passed. Slowly, painfully, he opened his eyes once again. Raising his head, he pulled himself to a sitting position. A searing pain tore through him, tracing the outline of broken ribs. Wrapping his arms around his chest, he held his breath until the hammering within lessened to a bearable degree.

Light reflecting off metal caught his eye and he turned to see the shredded remains of the Columbus, shattered against a clump of aged trees. The ship,

lying nearly on its head, had been torn in half by the force of the impact. Kirk stared at it for a moment, stunned that anyone had escaped its twisted remnants alive.

"Spock?" He called the name into the silent meadow, surprised at how weak his voice sounded. He rose to his knees, ignoring the warning pain as the ribs shifted within his chest. He could see the gaping hole in the Columbus' hull where Spock had been sitting an instant before impact. Kirk turned, sprained muscles in his neck protesting the action, and saw the edge of the right exterior frame sticking out from beneath the surface of the river.

"No." He struggled to his feet and took two steps forward before falling to his knees. Forcing his muscles to respond, he pulled himself to his feet again through will power alone and staggered to the water's edge.

The river was wide, the current strong. The shuttlecraft lay snagged against a fallen tree near the center. Kirk stood at the shore, swaying back and forth from one foot to another. It seemed an impossibly far distance. He bent down and began pulling off his boots.

Bright rays of the rising sun hit the battered hull, reflecting in his eyes and blinding him. The angle was wrong and Kirk shook his head, trying to clear his thoughts. The sun had been setting when they crashed. Now dawn was breaking out over the land. He ran his hand across his forehead, surprised to see the caked blood that rubbed off on his fingers.

Then he saw the color, a tiny patch of blue that became visible for a moment when the wind blew back the tall marsh grass around it.

He broke into a run, tortured muscles forgotten. The blue patch grew larger. He tried to increase his speed, but exceeded his strength and fell heavily to his knees. He had to stop. The pain in his chest drove the air from his lungs, radiating out like the spokes of a wheel until it seemed to reach every nerve ending. Spreading his hands out before him, he lowered his head and slowed his breathing, his eyes closed in concentration. After a moment the pain lessened and he rose to his feet and began to run again. He could see Spock now, lying face down amid the reeds. A terrible fear gripped him when he saw the unnatural angle of the limbs, the deathly stillness of the body.

Reaching Spock's side, Kirk stumbled forward, feeling for a pulse. For a single terrifying minute the artery seemed still. Then the rapid, erratic throbbing asserted itself. Running his hands over the Vulcan's body, Kirk eased him over on his back. He could see at once that one leg was badly broken, the tibia clearly visible through the pants. Judging the size of the blood stains surrounding the bone, there had been relatively little bleeding. For that, at least, Kirk was grateful. If the shattered bones had torn open an artery, Spock would have bled to death hours ago. Carefully pulling up the blue shirt, Kirk grimly examined the huge dark blotches splashed across Spock's chest, insensitive to the fact that his own body was marred with a mass of nearly identical bruises.

He gently lifted an eyelid with one finger while his other hand pressed along the carotid artery. The thick membrane of the inner eyelid partially

obscured the pupil and he could not clearly see the extent of the eye's dilation. The blow to the head Spock had taken earlier on the Columbus had left an ugly bruise along the edge of the hairline and Kirk cursed silently, knowing that it would probably hamper any healing attempts.

A feeling of lightheadedness assailed him and he leaned forward and pressed his hands against his temples, fighting to stay conscious. After a moment the weak spell faded away and he straightened up, only to gasp when the sharp edge of a broken rib dug into the surrounding muscle.

At the sound, Spock rolled his head to one side and groaned, struggling for consciousness. Kirk leaned forward, resting a hand on his shoulder. "Lie still." The forward motion sent a stab of pain through his chest again and he sucked in his breath. "Don't... try to move."

The pain of his voice, the hesitation, penetrated the last layers separating Spock from reality and he pulled himself up to the surface of consciousness. Slowly, he opened his eyes. Kirk noted instantly that the pupils were of normal size.

"Captain?" Spock's voice was weak and unsteady. "How badly are you injured?"

"A few broken ribs. Assorted cuts and bruises. I'm all right, Spock."

Spock struggled to rise. Kirk gently but firmly pushed him back. "But you're not. Lie still." Kirk continued his examination for another moment. Sitting back on his heels, he looked up to meet Spock's silent gaze. "Your right leg is badly broken. You have a possible concussion or skull fracture, and maybe some internal injuries. I don't want you to move until I get a better idea of your condition." He looked over his shoulder, studying the shuttlecraft. "I'm going back for the medical kit. At the very least, you're going to need antibiotics and a synthetic cast." Turning back, he tried a reassuring smile. "I'll be back as soon as I can."

"Jim?" Spock reached out to him before he could move away. The Captain's dismissal of his own injuries had not fooled either of them. "You are injured also. You should not move." Spock made a weak attempt to sit up. "I will go."

Kirk pushed him back again, the gentleness fading behind the force of the action. "Your *leg* is broken, for god's sake. *Lie still.*" Seeing the naked concern in the Vulcan's eyes, he softened his voice. "I understand your concern, Spock, but don't fight me on this. I *am* more functional than you at the moment."

Spock lay his head back against the marsh grass. He recognized the futility of further arguments. "Yes, Sir."

"Good." Kirk patted him gently on the shoulder. Rising to his feet, he walked rapidly back to the Columbus, fighting off the waves of dizziness and pain that assailed him every step of the way.

He found the medical kit wedged against a crumpled panel, its contents smashed into a thousand pieces, its life-giving fluids spilled out onto the

twisted floor of the ship. The storage area behind it was intact and Kirk reached inside and pulled out a handful of synthetic casts, grateful that they, at least, were undamaged. As he turned to leave, his gaze fell on the tricorder, ironically lying in its proper place amid all this chaos. He picked it up and flipped it on. It still worked.

Kirk was halfway back to Spock when a rib shifted and he fell to his knees, paralyzed by the stabbing pain. Seeing him fall, Spock pulled himself to one side, his hands wrapped around the thick marsh grass. "Jim?" He held his breath, concentrating on controlling the neural responses in his leg, frustrated by his inability to move.

Hearing the cry, Kirk stood, spreading his legs apart for balance, and walked to Spock's side. Lowering himself to his knees with deceptive ease, he ran the tricorder over the Vulcan's chest. Spock watched him intently, but the Captain betrayed no hint of suffering. "You should give more credence to luck. No internal injuries or broken ribs." He looked up to give Spock a wan smile before turning back to the tricorder and lowering its aim to the broken leg. The smile vanished as he studied the report. "It's a bad break. The bone's been shattered. You must have landed on it."

Spock nodded. "A futile attempt to break my fall."

Kirk ripped the pants open along the seam, exposing the area of the break. He forced himself to be dispassionate as he studied the serrated edge of bone poking through the skin, the soft marrow lying exposed to the air. He looked up to study the Vulcan's bruised forehead. "This will take some time to set. Will you be able to block the pain?"

"It will take me a moment to prepare."

Kirk nodded. Straightening Spock's leg as much as possible, he carefully positioned himself. Setting the tricorder against his knee, he studied the report it gave on the location of the shattered bones. He looked down at Spock, watching as the Vulcan withdrew into himself, relaxing his body, controlling the pain.

After a moment, Spock opened his eyes. "I am ready now."

Nodding without a word, Kirk grimly grabbed Spock around the ankle. "Here we go." As gently as possible, he pulled the bone fragments apart and realigned the broken ends, his eyes continually darting to the tricorder to be assured of his aim. Below him, Spock lay silently, his eyes closed, his body relaxed.

Sweat beaded out on Kirk's forehead as the broken edge moved away from the skin and sank deeper into the interior of the leg. It seemed to take forever. Spock had made no sound at all, but Kirk could feel the tenseness now beneath his fingers.

Finally the bones aligned and he pulled out the flexible cast and wrapped it around the leg, thankful that the sterile seals had not been broken. At least they would prevent any further bacterial contamination from entering the wound. Reacting to the heat of Spock's body, the cast swelled out from its

wafer-thin original form, sterilizing the entire area of the break as it molded itself to the shape of Spock's leg and hardened.

Wiping the back of his arm across his forehead, Kirk took a deep breath. "Done."

Spock opened his eyes and stared at him blankly for a moment. Then his expression cleared. "Thank you, Captain."

Kirk reached out to touch his shoulder and saw that his hand was shaking. "Look at me. You'd think that this was the first cast I'd ever put on anyone." He laughed softly in relief, the sound catching in his throat as a stabbing pain cut through his lungs. He held his breath and the pain lessened.

"How badly are you injured, Captain?"

Kirk gave him a sad smile, his gaze falling on the Vulcan's bruised chest. "You were damned lucky, Spock. Your ribs must be as hard as steel."

"Jim?"

Kirk eased himself down to Spock's side, running his hands gingerly across his chest. "Three or four cracked ribs." Picking up the tricorder, he ran it over his ribcage. "Not as bad as I thought. Only three."

Spock struggled to sit up. Kirk's iron stare forced him back. "Just what do you think you're doing?"

"Your ribs..." Spock closed his eyes for a minute, furious with himself for the visible lapse. "Broken ribs can be a very serious injury... They must be bandaged." Despite the pause, he spoke the words in one breath.

"Spock, lie still."

Their eyes met for a moment. Then Spock again made a move to rise. It was clearly apparent to the Captain that his First Officer would bandage his ribs regardless of his own wishes. They fenced visually for a moment before Kirk finally gave in to the reality of the situation. "Very well, but move carefully and once you're done, you rest and leave everything to me, understood?"

"Understood." Spock sat unsteadily for a moment before reaching for the bottom of the Captain's tunic. Kirk forestalled him and removed the shirt himself, visibly flinching when the ribs poked into the torn muscle. His jaw tightened as he pulled the tunic up over his head.

For a split second, Spock regarded the Captain's bruised and swollen chest with unconcealed dismay. Then the lapse was gone. Spock calmly began to wrap the flexible cast across the ribs, aligning them into position as he did so. Kirk endured the procedure in silence.

Despite his injury, Spock's work was characteristically meticulous and it was several minutes before the bandaging was completed and the tunic back in place. Inhaling deeply, Kirk gave him a grateful look as the bandage hardened

and supported the shifting ribs, allowing him the luxury of breathing without pain.

A distant rumble of thunder distracted them. They looked up in unison to see the bright sunlight suddenly disappearing behind a wall of dark clouds that seemed to have appeared from nowhere. The wind picked up, blowing pollen and seed heads into the air. Kirk brushed them away from his nose, eyeing the black wall moving toward them from the horizon. "Rather rapid weather changes, wouldn't you say, Mr. Spock?"

"Indeed, Captain. I would suggest that we find some shelter without delay."

Kirk tilted his head toward the sky. The suddenness of the climatic change astonished him. Rain began spattering his upturned face. He turned toward the shuttlecraft. "The Columbus would seem to be our best bet at the moment." He rose slowly to his feet, testing the ribs. A brilliant streak of lightning split the blackened sky in the distance. "We'd better hurry."

Reaching down, he laced his arm through Spock's and gently eased him up. The Vulcan staggered, a flash of pain evident in his expression. Kirk caught him, the sudden movement sending a white-hot agony through his chest. Spock regained his balance and held Kirk steady until the Captain caught his breath. Then, together, they helped one another to the limited shelter provided by the wrecked hull of the shuttlecraft.

The rain pelted against the side of the Columbus for hours. The sky became dark as pitch as the wind whipped the cold rain around the sides of the vessel and blew it into the gloomy interior.

Kirk and Spock sat, huddled in the farthest corner, but in the wreckage of the shuttlecraft there was little protection and they were both soaked to the skin within minutes. In the brief periods of darkness between bursts of lightning, they looked like one creature. Arms wrapped around each other, they bowed their heads forward, resting their foreheads on one another's shoulders, exhausted from the pain and cold.

When the storm did not dissipate, Kirk shifted his weight, attempting to find a more comfortable position. At the motion, Spock lifted his head. "Are you all right?"

Kirk nodded as another thunderous burst from directly overhead shook the Columbus. Both sets of eyes looked up to study the lightning, cresting in magnificent arcs across the sky, splitting the blackness into a thousand tiny fragments. The rain ran down Spock's arched eyebrows, flooding his eyes, and Kirk reached out to wipe it away.

At his touch, Spock looked down at him and a faint smile touched his mouth. Gently he stretched his hand out and reciprocated the gesture. The action surprised Kirk and he looked into Spock's eyes in puzzlement. The wistful smile

remained on the Vulcan's face, his expression a strange mixture of tenderness and sorrow.

A worried look flashed across Kirk's face. "Spock? What is it?"

As if in deference, the storm abated momentarily and his words hung clearly in the air. Spock did not answer. He continued to stroke Kirk's face, his touch so light that the Captain could hardly feel it. The tenderness in his eyes vanished and naked anguish took its place.

Seeing the change of expression, Kirk felt an icy premonition take hold of him. Pulling the tricorder forward, he ran it over Spock's leg. The wind picked up again as another downpour washed over them. Kirk ignored the rain falling on him, bouncing off the tricorder's waterproof surface. His eyes were fixed on the report the device gave him, the cold and impersonal report that threatened for an instant to tear him apart.

The signs were unmistakable. The sterile cast was put on too late. The wound had already been invaded by a form of alien bacteria that the tricorder couldn't begin to identify, a bacteria that was proliferating with frightening speed. Tiny red lights flashed across the instrument's monitoring screen, pinpointing the source of the infection, detailing its ominous spread along the striated muscles.

Kirk looked up at Spock, anguish carved into his face. Laying the tricorder to one side, he reached up and, putting his hands on Spock's shoulders, drew his friend toward him in a gentle embrace. "I'm not hurting you, am I?" The words, spoken quietly, came out mumbled.

Spock lay his head on the Captain's shoulder and closed his eyes. "No, Jim."

Leonard McCoy stood, his body tense, his hands clasped tightly behind his back. His gaze was locked on the viewscreen. Behind him, he could hear Scotty prowling around the communications console. The heavily accented voice broke the silence of the bridge. "Anything, Lieutenant?"

"Negative, Mr. Scott. I get no response. I've broadcast on all wavelengths but there is nothing." Uhura's brow was deeply furrowed, but her hands flew over the console with ease as she searched for any signal, any sound out of the ordinary.

"What could have happened to them, Scotty?" McCoy's voice was agitated. His gaze never wavered from the starfield spread out before him.

The Scotsman swivelled in mid-stride and walked to his side. "I dinna know, Doctor. We've run two full sweeps. No debris is registerin'. There's nae a sign of expelled internal atmosphere, no residual radiation."



"They couldn't have simply disappeared." The Doctor's ability to keep the agitation from his voice was slipping away with the passage of time. There was a discernable edge to it now.

"True, Doctor. They're out there somewhere. There'll be a trail, either left by the Columbus or by whatever it was that took them away. But there'll be a trail somewhere and we'll find it. It may take some time, but we'll find it. You've my word on that." He gave McCoy a faint smile before turning back to Uhura. "Lieutenant, notify Starfleet that, since they've received no word from the Captain on their end and he is already four hours overdue, we'll begin backtrackin' his projected course until we locate him."

"Aye, Sir."

Scott turned back to stand shoulder to shoulder with McCoy. They stared silently into the viewscreen, watching the lights dancing in the void, shining steadily by the thousands. The stars seemed to mock them in their search, daring them to find two tiny living creatures in all that vastness.

"I'll find them all right. I'll find them."

Scotty said the words to himself, his eyes fixed on the stars before him. McCoy turned to him and managed a weak smile. "That Captain wouldn't expect anything less."

Two Klingons sat huddled together, studying the star chart before them. The younger of the men pointed a thick finger at an insignificant planet near the border zone. "The mercenaries reported that the shuttlecraft was heading in a direct line to Delta Draconis." He looked over at his companion. "If he is alive, that is where he will be."

The older man nodded. "He will be alive, Kraithin." He straightened up, his eyes black and glittering. "James T. Kirk, renowned Captain of the Enterprise, all alone on a tiny planet, just waiting for us to come and pluck you off." He laughed, the sound devoid of pleasure. "I want him, Commander. It will necessitate your penetration of Federation space, but the possible rewards of his capture outweigh the dangers." He turned to his young officer and smiled. "Do you not agree?"

Commander Kraithin nodded without hesitation. Possession of such a prisoner would be of great significance. It would serve to greatly increase the powers of both men. And that was, after all, what life was all about in the Klingon Empire.

The ominous warnings of the tricorder became clearer with the setting sun. After six nightmarish hours, the storm had finally ended only moments ago and Kirk had helped Spock out into the Draconian sunshine before it faded away. Even

at its low level on the horizon, the sun was warm, evaporating the rain from their bodies within minutes.

Kirk held the tricorder out before him, studying the results, forcing down a rising sensation of dread. Spock sat, propped up against a tree, watching his face. Kirk closed the lid and looked up. "There's no doubt about it. The infection is spreading." His voice was so level that it surprised him. "The area affected has expanded out 3.7 centimeters in the past forty-five minutes."

Spock nodded. He could feel the fire spreading out from the area of the break in concentric circles, inflaming the delicate tissues, giving them the sensitivity of burned skin. Soon the fever would begin.

Kirk rose to his feet and, shielding his eyes with one hand, scanned the horizon. "If only we knew something about the native flora, we might be able to find something with medicinal properties." A momentary look of despair flashed in his eyes. "Damn. I wish McCoy were here." The words came out as a whisper, but to Spock it sounded more like a plea. Kirk stood a moment longer, then turned to crouch down at the Vulcan's side. For an instant, he caught his breath, reminded that his ribs still needed care. He shrugged off the discomfort and looked up to meet Spock's gaze. "Without antibiotics, we can't fight the infection directly so we'll have to treat the symptoms. The most serious one will be the high fever."

"If my temperature can be kept down to a tolerable level, my body should be strong enough to overcome the infection and survive." Spock paused for a moment, studying the shimmering water a hundred feet away. "It is fortunate that we are so near the river."

A sad smile crossed the Captain's face. "When your fever gets high, that water will seem very cold."

"I will endure it."

Kirk nodded. Spock was strong. If anyone could survive the ordeal ahead, he could. A cool evening breeze ruffled Kirk's hair and he looked up at the sky. The sun had slipped below the horizon and darkness was rapidly filling the meadow. "We'd better get inside while we can still see." He helped Spock to his feet. "Does this planet have a moon?"

"No." Spock clutched against Kirk's arm as he involuntarily put weight on his leg. His entire body stiffened and for an instant, Kirk thought he would fall. His hold around the Vulcan's waist tightened. "Come on," he said softly. "Lean on me."

It took them over fifteen minutes to walk the thirty feet back to the Columbus. Night had engulfed the land by the time they had reached the shuttlecraft and they both nearly stumbled attempting to maneuver inside the twisted wreck. Kirk eased Spock against the far wall and sat next to him. The night air was cold in sharp contrast to the sun's warmth. Tentatively, he put an arm around Spock's shoulder. "Lean against me. It will help us stay warm."

The Vulcan looked over at him. A sad ghost of a smile played across his face, but in the darkness, the Captain could not see it. Carefully, he lay his

head on Kirk's shoulder and closed his eyes as the Captain's arm encircled his waist. Suddenly Spock felt very tired and his words "Am I... making you un... comfortable... ?" came out garbled.

"No, Mr. Spock. It's all right."

Spock's condition deteriorated as the night progressed. His sleep became disturbed and when Kirk reached a hand up to still him, he could feel a faint tremor pass through the Vulcan's body. His forehead was hot. There was no mistaking that the fever had begun. Silently, Kirk pulled the tricorder forward and studied the illuminated screen. Spock's temperature was not high enough to merit awakening him and taking him to the river so the Captain let him sleep. Settling back close to his friend, Kirk was aware of the gravity of their situation.

The fever grew worse toward daybreak. Spock lay silently, his eyes half opened, his breath coming in short, ragged gasps.

Kirk could feel the heat begin to radiate off his body in a series of waves. "Come on, Spock." He put one arm gently under the Vulcan's shoulders. "Let's go down to the river where you can cool off."

Spock rolled his eyes, then focused on his face. "Jim... ? What... " His head fell back against the Captain's arm.

Kirk leaned down, barely able to speak past the lump in his throat. "I said the fever is getting to high. We have to try to bring it down. I'm going to help you to the river." He said the words slowly, enunciating each one at a time.

Spock looked up at him for a long moment, as if searching his confused brain for the proper meaning. "Yes... I... " He waved a hand weakly in the air as he made an uncoordinated attempt to rise on his own.

Fighting back a rising panic at Spock's inability to understand, Kirk caught the limp fingers in a firm grip. "I said I would help you." With great care, he eased Spock to his feet, cursing the injured ribs that prevented him from carrying the Vulcan in his arms.

The trip to the riverbank seemed endless. Trying to walk, Spock continually lost his balance. Kirk grabbed him around the waist, taking the Vulcan's full weight against him as he guided the semiconscious man to the water's edge. He gasped as Spock clutched at his ribs, the Vulcan's mind too fevered to realize what he was doing. Spock's head rolled to one side and came to rest on his shoulder.

"Come on Spock." Kirk spoke into the damp hair that brushed against his chin. "We're almost there."

His boots sank into the mud and he took a step backward and lay Spock down onto his back. Cupping his hands in the icy river, Kirk held the water for a

moment to warm it before gently wiping it across Spock's face. Pulling up the tunic, he eased it over Spock's head, then repeated the gesture on his chest and shoulders in an attempt to lower the raging fever.

The cool water hitting the hot skin sent a visible shock through Spock's body. The sensation seemed to revive him and he opened his eyes and looked up at Kirk. The Captain continued to stroke his face, swirling his free hand in the water, then brining it out to splash the intoxicating coolness across the Vulcan's fiery skin. He could almost hear the sizzle as the water boiled off the surface.

Marshalling his strength, Spock reached up to touch his face. "Jim... I... am..." He closed his eyes for a moment, drawing the strength he needed from somewhere deep within himself. Then he looked up at Kirk again. "...sorry..."

Kirk lifted one of Spock's hands, spreading the water along the inside of his arm. The hand hung limply. Except for the radiating heat, it felt like the arm of a corpse.

"You know, Mr. Spock, I was thinking that I'd like to take you to see Iowa when we get out of here. We could put in for some R&R. McCoy should go along with the idea. We can go to Earth, to Iowa." His voice began to tremble imperceptively. "I'll show you where I went to school, the tree that I fell out of and broke my arm when I was seven." He laughed and a single tear slid down his cheek. "My mother... she gave me one whale of a spanking over that. I wasn't supposed to climb that high, you see. She told me again..." His voice broke and he turned his face away.

Spock's hand weakly brushed against his arm. "I... would like..." The fingers fell away and Kirk looked back, a sharp fear coursing from one end of his body to the other. Spock's eyes were still open. The Vulcan watched him with an expression of deep sadness. "The Doctor... would..." The words trailed off as Spock once again slipped away into unconsciousness. Kirk smoothed the damp hair away from his brow.

The sound of a twig snapping came from behind them. Kirk spun around, reaching instinctively for his missing phaser. His hand brushed against the empty belt as he rose to his feet.

Several humanoids stood, eyes wide with curiosity, in a silent semi-circle around them. Kirk's mind instantly recorded the number of creatures he faced. Eleven, all apparently male, dressed in simple, primitive clothing of a type ubiquitous throughout the galaxy. They had long arms and legs covered with soft, white skin and pale yellow hair hanging down in two waist-length braids. Their eyes, canted at a forty-five degree angle from a finely crested nose, were an odd combination of brown and silver and seemed to glow with an iridescent quality, reflecting the colors of the surroundings. The natives waited in an unmistakably defensive crouch.

Kirk held out his hands to them, palms upward in a universal gesture of peaceful intentions. At his movement, the Draconians raised themselves up to full height. Kirk could hear the dull thud as the thick wooden clubs which dangled from their belts struck against one another. Slowly, the men advanced in a steady line toward him.

Until they had stood erect, Kirk had underestimated their size. The upper body was no larger than his own, but their legs were long, and erect, they all stood a good head taller than he. They were square and stocky despite the long legs and spread out their powerful arms to touch one another as they moved forward.

Kirk positioned himself directly before Spock. He began talking, telling them his name, asking if there were anything they could do to help Spock. Knowing that the sounds could reassure them even if the words had no meaning, Kirk ignored their puzzled expressions and continued to speak, his voice soft and soothing. Several in the group seemed to hesitate at the alien language. They turned to one another and spoke, low, guttural sounds, punctuated by a series of bizarre clicks and pauses.

Behind him, Spock groaned. The Draconian conversation stopped and they turned back to Kirk, craning their heads to one side as they peered at Spock. They began to move forward. Several clubs, heavy, dark weapons without ornamentation, were drawn. Uncertain of their intent, Kirk spread his feet and held his arms out before him in a protective, defensive gesture. "My friend had been injured." The tone of the words crossed the language barrier. The threat in Kirk's voice was universal.

The Draconians stopped and stared at him for a moment. They took a step backward. The guttural speech began as the four men standing at the forefront spoke to one another. Then, without warning, they charged him, knocking him backwards. He threw his weight to one side, grimacing as pain shot through his chest, in an instinctive effort to keep from falling back on Spock. The force of the movement sent them all to their knees. The natives seemed to be all over him at once and within seconds they had twisted his arms to his sides and pinned him securely to the ground.

Realizing that resistance was useless, he stopped struggling and once again tried to communicate. The Draconians seemed intrigued by the sound of his voice and, now that he was helpless, they gathered closely around him, touching his face, running their fingers along his lips. They reached out to touch his hair, seemingly surprised at its short length and dark color. A young girl ran out from behind the Columbus. Her eyes were enormous as she stared at Kirk, now safely restrained by her fellows. She spoke to the others, her speech rapid, her arm movements wild, as she pointed from Kirk to the shuttlecraft and back again.

Kirk twisted his head to see several of the natives move behind him and kneel beside Spock. He struggled against the crushing strength pinning him down. One of the Draconians, the one that Kirk sensed instinctively to be the leader, reached out to touch the Vulcan's face. Uttering a low cry, he pulled his hand back as if it had been burned. Another hand went out, tracing a line along the discolored forehead. The men stared at one another. The leader pulled a short knife from his belt.

"No!" Kirk put all of his strength behind the effort and nearly succeeded in freeing himself.

The man with the knife looked at him quizzically. Then, lifting Spock's left hand, he lightly nicked the prominent vein running across its surface.

A universal gasp escaped them all as the dark emerald color erupted from the tear. The hand was dropped. Everyone standing near Spock took a hurried step backward. The air was suddenly filled with sounds as all of the natives seemed to be speaking at once.

The man who had cut him silenced them with a shout. He held out the knife before him. A single drop of blood balanced precariously on the tip for a moment. When it fell, he reached his hand out below to catch it in his palm. Bringing his hand close to his face, he studied the blood intently for a moment. Then he held out his hand to the others clustering around him. A finger reached out to touch it, the action followed by a gasp of astonishment. Twelve sets of alien eyes darted from the open hand to the Vulcan, lying silently by the riverbank.

Kirk focused his attention on the man holding the knife. He could see at once the reason for their astonishment. The prominent veins that spread across their fair skin like spider webs were of a soft ivory color. Clearly, the blood that flowed through those veins was far different from that of the strange creature before them. He twisted in their grasp, swearing silently that he had no open wounds or visible bruises to broadcast the color of his blood as Spock's head bruise had broadcast his. He tried to reach the tunic that Spock had so carefully put back on when he had bandaged his ribs an eternity ago. The bruises were there, but he could not free his hand to reveal them.

The Draconian leader moved back to bend over the Vulcan. He ran his fingers along the side of Spock's face. He spoke to the others who moved forward to cluster behind him as he studied the bruises. Looking down, he examined the cast with interest, prodding it with a thick finger.

Spock groaned. Kirk twisted in a useless attempt to free himself. "Stop it. You're hurting him. Can't you see he needs help?" He spoke the words softly, his eyes locked on the leader. The man rose to his feet and stood, watching him. He spoke to the others without turning away. His words galvanized the natives behind him and they clustered around Spock, sliding their arms under his shoulders and knees. Effortlessly, they lifted him into the air. His head rolled back and someone caught it in an open hand and held it level.

With one gesture, Kirk was pulled to his feet and the hands fell away. Uncertain of their intentions, he moved to stand beside Spock. The leader eyed him for a moment. Then he led them away from the river and into the dark mountains beyond.

The path they followed led them into the forest. Abruptly, the level terrain gave way to a series of steep inclines. The trail was rocky and overgrown with vines. Kirk had trouble keeping pace, the pain from the broken ribs and bruises, nearly forgotten earlier, rose up to shorten his breath and weaken his steps. He stumbled and a thick arm came forward from behind to support him. He gasped, halting as a sharp stabbing hampered his breathing and doubled him over at the waist.

A gruff bark came from ahead. Kirk looked up to see the leader standing impatiently, his fingers laced around Spock's dangling arm. "All right." Kirk took a deep careful breath, sublimating the discomfort. "I'm coming."

The man seemed to understand his words and turned, his hand still draped casually over Spock's, leading them deeper into the forest.

They walked for nearly an hour. No one made any effort to restrain Kirk, to keep him with the group. They seemed to realize that he would not stray far from his unconscious companion.

Finally, the path began to widen and Kirk could smell the distinctively sweet odor of burning wood. He looked up to see black tendrils swirl in the air currents over his head. Quickening his faltering gait, he moved beside Spock. New voices, different voices came from ahead and the woods seemed to erupt with people. Women and children primarily, an old man hobbling on a cane. They gathered around the group, staring at the two distinctive aliens in their midst with undisguised fascination. A slender hand went out to touch Kirk's arm, his tunic. The gesture was repeated several times. Kirk noticed that they did not approach Spock in a similar manner. Before he had time to ascertain the reason, they began to move again. The trees thinned out and the vines disappeared. The moss beneath their feet was replaced by beaten earth and, walking beside Spock, Kirk stepped with some uneasiness into the center of a small square. A dozen or so primitive dwellings flanked the tiny plaza, coarse, wooden structures built without plumb lines. The few tiny windows that broke the unfinished surfaces tilted at haphazard angles to the walls and roofs surrounding them.

They walked quickly to the central dwelling. Kirk noted that it was slightly larger than the rest of the houses and had a second room hammered on to the end. The leader kicked the heavy wooden door open and led them inside. He stood with his back to the wall as the others passed him and carried Spock into the addition at the back. A curtain separated the two rooms, a stained white covering with faded embroidery along the edges.

A woven rope mattress on a long, narrow wooden frame no more than eighteen inches high sat pushed against the far wall. A thin comforter lay atop it, a material with the softness of burlap stuffed with dried straw.

Spock was eased down onto the crude bed. One of the natives handed the Captain an aged blanket riddled with moth holes. The leader stood over the bed, studying the Vulcan for a moment. Swivelling his head toward Kirk, he spoke a long string of unintelligible words. Cocking his head to one side, he gazed at Kirk expectantly. Then he pointed to Spock and spoke again. Several of the sounds were repeated, but the Captain was unable to make any sense out of their meaning.

The flow of words stopped. The Draconian canted his head to the side again.

"I'm sorry." Kirk shook his head. "I don't understand."

The Draconian's expression fell. Then he patted the Captain on the arm and turned back to Spock. He spoke again, his tone seemingly light and unconcerned. Looking up at Kirk, he smiled and nodded his head. Then he turned and led the others from the room. The curtain fell back into place. Kirk could hear their voices from the room beyond, but their sounds were soft, unobtrusive. Then the creak of the door groaning in protest as it was pushed open and then

slammed shut. The outer room was quiet now. Kirk walked cautiously to the curtain and, after listening for a moment, pulled it aside. The house was empty. They were alone.

Spock lay as silent as death and Kirk returned to kneel at his side. Putting his hands on either side of Spock's face, he wiped the sweat from his eyes with his fingers. The door groaned again and he turned to see the leader of this village standing at the doorway. The man pointed to himself. "G'wai Chia'zin." He thumped an open hand against his chest. "G'wai Chia'zin."

Kirk rose to his feet, putting himself between G'wai and the bed. The iridescent Draconian eyes narrowed slightly and a faint smile touched his lips.

Kirk pointed to himself. "Kirk."

G'wai repeated the name, the sound simple and easy to make in comparison to the clicks and glottal stops of his own. His eyes darted to Spock. Kirk told G'wai his name, then made a drinking motion with his hands. "Water. I need water to cool him." He turned toward Spock and ran an open hand along the Vulcan's glistening forehead, his eyes never leaving the native. "Water."

Understanding suddenly came into the Draconian's eyes and he nodded and left the room, returning a few minutes later with a wooden bucket and an animal skin cloth.

Kirk immediately began to sponge Spock's body. G'wai watched him from the doorway. At the feel against his skin, Spock opened his eyes. The thick inner eyelid did not roll back and he reached out in fear when he could not see. Kirk's hands caught his own and pressed them together.

"It's all right, Spock. I'm right here."

At his words, the Vulcan calmed. The membrane slowly slid up behind the eye. Spock looked up at him, but there was no recognition in his eyes. Kirk dipped the cloth into the water and brought it back to wipe across Spock's chest. The Vulcan shuddered at the touch and tried helplessly to twist away.

Kirk leaned forward, one hand on Spock's forehead, the other across his chest. "Easy. Try to relax." His own heart hammered wildly within him as he held Spock down. The Vulcan struggled weakly for a moment, then lay still, his breathing erratic and shallow. The eyelid rolled back into place again.

G'wai walked forward to stand behind him. He touched Kirk on the shoulder and spoke a long string of sounds that meant nothing. He turned and pointed to the door. Some of the sounds repeated and the Draconian smiled. Not understanding the man's carefree expression, Kirk turned his attention back to Spock. Behind him, G'wai continued to smile, apparently unperturbed by Kirk's abrupt dismissal.

Spock began to mumble, disconnected phrases in Vulcan. Kirk caught a few words that he recognized; names, expressions. He heard Sarek's name several times. Spock opened his eyes and focused on his face. He began to speak to him in Vulcan, repeating the same words over and over. He called out his father's name, his eyes never leaving the Captain's face.

"I'm not Sarek, Spock. It's Jim."

Spock quieted, staring at him without comprehension. A long, low groan escaped him and his eyes rolled back. His body seemed impossibly hot.

Kirk gave up attempting to cool his fever, realizing its futility. He held Spock's flushed face within his hands, listening to the rattling sounds his lungs made as they pulled the air in and out. The breathing became more erratic, then stopped.

Kirk's heart seemed to stop with it. He found the pulse, but the chest did not move. Tilting Spock's head back, he bent forward. Before he could begin resuscitation, the ragged breathing resumed, then stopped again, jolting back and forth in a life or death battle.

G'wai leaned forward. He spoke and the smile returned. Kirk turned on him, fear making his words sharp. "If you're not going to help, get out. What are you standing there smiling about. Can't you see he's dying!"

The translation of the Captain's words were lost on the native, but the meaning was crystal clear. The smile vanished and G'wai backed out of the room.

An hour passed and G'wai did not come back. No one came in. Kirk knelt beside the bed, watching Spock, counting every labored breath, gripped in a paralyzing fear that each one would be the last. Spock lay very still now and Kirk had enough medical knowledge to know how serious his condition was.

"Don't die." He whispered the words, one hand pressed against the artery, the other across Spock's forehead. "Please, Spock. Don't die."

A feeling of black despair permeated his soul with the realization that Spock would die, was dying even as he watched and he was helpless to stop it. He lowered his head, physically and emotionally spent, until it rested against the Vulcan's ribs. His hands gripped the threadbare blanket until his fingers tore holes through it. "I can't help you."

The creaking of the door intruded on his grief. G'wai entered the room, followed by an old woman in a long, brightly colored robe. Her hair, white as new-fallen snow, reached down nearly to the floor and, unlike every other native that Kirk had seen, was not tied back, but hung loosely about her, forming a shroud around her thin body.

G'wai gestured toward the old woman, speaking rapidly. Several others entered the tiny room as he spoke. They nodded their heads in agreement. The old woman stepped forward and, raising her arms in the air, began a series of chants, repeating sounds and gestures over and over. Kirk rose to his feet.

The old woman stopped speaking. She turned to G'wai, who went into the other room and returned with a wooden bucket. A ladle hung over one side. Everyone in the room moved to stand near the bed.

Kirk moved forward, forcing them all back by one step. "What are you going to do?"

The woman glared at him, clearly unused to interference. She spoke sharply to the men standing behind her and they stepped forward and, grabbing Kirk by the arms, pulled him to one side. Seeing them form a circle around the bed, Kirk did not resist.

G'wai moved to the head of the bed and knelt down. Putting his hands on either side of Spock's face, he gently, but firmly tilted his head back. At the foreign touch, Spock's eyes opened and he stared incomprehensibly into the alien face he had never seen before. He struggled and someone grabbed his hands, holding them down.

"Stop it!" Kirk struggled against the native strength with utter futility. "You don't know what that will do to him. Stop it!"

No one paid his words any attention. All eyes were on the old woman as she dipped the ladle into the bucket and, filling it to the brim, brought it forward. Spock pulled away and it fell to the floor, creating a bright red design against the roughly grained wood. The natives gasped. The old woman watched in stupification as the pattern spread out across the floor. Then, turning enraged eyes on Spock, she struck him across the face, a weak blow that nevertheless elicited a groan.

Kirk pulled against the Draconian strength. "Let me check it with the tricorder before you give it to him... please."

The woman ignored him again and refilled the ladle. G'wai's grip on Spock's face was tighter now, his fingers depressing the skin. The ladle was raised to his lips as G'wai forced his teeth apart. The woman ran her fingers along the sides of Spock's neck, engaging the swallow reflex. The crimson fluid flowed down his throat, running out along the sides of his mouth as he gasped for air.

"You don't know what..." A knife came from somewhere behind Kirk and pressed against his throat. A voice muttered a single word. The sounds were unintelligible, but the meaning very clear.

The process was repeated as Spock twisted weakly in their grasp. Kirk pushed against the knife held at his throat, but kept his silence. The room was filled with Draconians. Resistance would have accomplished nothing.

The old woman stood back, a satisfied expression on her face. Below her, Spock lay, coughing and gasping. G'wai released his hold and rose to his feet. He moved to stand before the old woman and bowed to the waist three times. The action was repeated by everyone else present. The woman stood, surrounded by her admirers, beaming with pleasure. Then she turned and walked regally from the room, the others parting like waves before her. They all followed in her footsteps, tracing her path at a respectful distance.

Kirk stood in puzzlement for a moment. Rubbing his arms to restore the circulation, he knelt at Spock's side. With one hand, he wiped the liquid's residue from the Vulcan's lips while he readjusted the tricorder with the other. The results spread across the screen and told him nothing. The substance they had forced down Spock's throat was totally alien and the tricorder could give him no information concerning it. In his state of relative helplessness, Kirk wasn't sure if that was good or bad.



Spock had lapsed once again into unconsciousness and Kirk, suddenly feeling exhausted, pulled up the ancient blanket and carefully tucked it in along Spock's neckline. The action seemed to drain what was left of his energy.

G'wai and several others abruptly re-entered the room, carrying another bed between them. Pushing it up against the adjacent wall, the pointed to Kirk, smiling pleasantly. One of them sat on the bed, slapping an open palm against it. All of the Draconians seemed immensely pleased with themselves. They made sounds resembling laughter before rising and graciously ambling en masse from the room.

Kirk watched them go. For all he knew, they could have poisoned Spock a moment ago and now they had brought him a bed. But he was too tired, too emotionally devastated, to attempt to decipher their contradictory behavior. Lowering himself into a sitting position, he draped his arm across Spock's chest and rested his fingers along the carotid artery. Leaning wearily against the creaking bedframe, he closed his eyes, his mind numb from weariness, his concentration centering on the erratic movement of the heartbeat beneath his fingers.

An oblique ray from the morning sun found its way through the stained window pane and bounced down, casting its reflected light through Kirk's closed eyelids. The brightness penetrated into his dream and he awoke with a jolt. For an instant, his mind was still caught up in the fantasy and he blinked as the bright reality assailed his mind. During the night, his hand had slipped and now lay dangling across the far side of the bed. A cold fear grabbed hold of him and he reached out before he had even lifted his head.

Spock's face was cool to the touch. Kirk rose up on his knees and bent over him, his breath caught in his throat, a feeling of pure terror running through his body like a bolt of electricity.

Then he saw the chest move. The relief it brought nearly made him fall and he slid to the floor and rested his head along the side of the bed. Pulling out the tricorder, he ran the same series of tests he had run a hundred times in the last few days. He could scarcely believe his eyes when the results appeared. Spock's body temperature had fallen nearly to normal during the night. The infection was visibly receding.

Lowering the tricorder, Kirk passed it over Spock's leg. The shattered ends of the broken tibia fitted into each other like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. The tiny bone fragments surrounding the break were gone, the internal irritation that they had caused was totally absent. The bones lined up straight and true.

Kirk's gaze remained fixed on the instrument's report. The break was already partially healed, the bones knitting together almost as he watched. Looking up at Spock's face, he saw that the bruise marring the Vulcan's forehead had vanished completely. He pulled down the tattered blanket. Spock's chest was unblemished, the skin smooth and unmarked. *What in God's name was in that drink,* he thought to himself. *McCoy would sell his soul to get his hands on it.*

Spock let out a soft groan, but, unlike the few sounds he had made during the past several hours, this one held no pain. To the Captain, it sounded like music to his ears.

The Enterprise assumed orbit around Gamma Velorum VI thirty-four hours and seventeen minutes after the search had begun. It was the twelfth planet that they had investigated. This world was larger than the others and the search would take six hours, two hours longer than usual. Mr. Scott stood tensely before the command chair, resisting the temptation to widen the scanner sweeps in order to hurry the investigation.

The turbolift doors opened behind him, but Scott didn't have to turn around to know who had just stepped on to the bridge. He gave the Doctor a wan smile as McCoy moved to his familiar place at his side.

"Anything, Scotty." The Doctor's voice was coarse with exhaustion. Like the Scotsman beside him, he had not slept since the search began.

"It'll be a few minutes, Doctor. We've just started."

McCoy began to bounce up and down on the balls of his feet. His mind had replayed a thousand different scenarios of what might be happening to his two friends. None of them were very pleasant and, with the passage of time, they had grown worse. Avidly, his eyes searched the smooth globe below them, as if searching for a sign, a premonition, anything. The planet spun on with relentless indifference, mocking his concern by its very lifelessness.

Within minutes of beginning the planet survey, Chekov turned to them with his first set of comprehensive results. "Mr. Scott. I am picking up humanoid life form readings, Sir, on a primitive level. The readings are similar enough to humans that the Captain may not show up if he's down there."

Scott began to swear silently to himself. This was their first contact with humanoid life readings. If they had to run a highly selective scan, it would take several additional hours.

"Find Spock." McCoy spoke the words softly. "If he's down there, the Captain won't be far away."

"Aye, ye're right, Doctor." Scott turned to Chekov. "Set scanners to concentrate on Vulcan readings."

McCoy and Scott both watched Chekov as he recalibrated his sensors, willing him to find something immediately, knowing that, even focusing with a tight beam on Spock, it would take at least six hours before the entire planet was thoroughly scanned. Scott looked into McCoy's bleary eyes. "Why dinna ye go get some rest, Doctor. I'll call you if we learn anything."

McCoy looked down at him. "No. I'd rather be up here in case I'm needed in a hurry." He smiled, the expression so full of sadness that Scott could hardly bear to look at him.

The hours passed slowly. Kirk would occasionally stand and walk from one end of the room to the other. For most of the day, he sat by Spock's bed, staring in wonderment as the color slowly returned to his face. By nightfall, his temperature had fallen to near normal. Twice, G'wai had come in, bringing him food and drink. The first visit was done in silence, but on the second one, G'wai motioned him toward the outer doorway. Kirk understood him to mean that he could stay with Spock if Kirk wished to exercise, explore the village, get out of the tiny room before the walls began to close in on him. Both times, the Captain declined. G'wai stood at the doorway, the tattered curtain draped across his arm, his eyes darting back and forth between them. He made an eating gesture and pointed outside. Again, Kirk declined, indicating the empty bowl at his side. The Draconian nodded his head. The Captain's answer did not seem to surprise him.

He noticed that Kirk's bed had not been slept in and went over to sit on it, pounding his closed fist into the lumpy mattress. Bouncing up and down, he gave Kirk a quizzical look.

The Captain smiled. "The bed is fine. I'll sleep on it tonight." Seeing the Draconian's look of bafflement, he moved to sit beside him on the bed. "I wanted to stay with my friend. Do you understand?" G'wai watched him, then turned to look at Spock, peaceful and relaxed in deep sleep. He spoke again and there was a strange, puzzled sound to his voice. Then he turned and, with a silence surprising for someone with his bulk, quietly left the house.

It was the middle of the night and the soft creak of the ancient bedframe echoed loudly in the silence. Kirk awoke from his light sleep with a start. The room was quiet, the surrounding forest so silent that it almost hurt his ears. He sat up in the bed, wondering what had awakened him. Rising to his feet, he crossed the room and sat on the bed beside Spock. Looking down, he realized that Spock had moved and it was the movement that had disturbed him. Kirk could see him struggle for consciousness. He could sense his attempts, but the effort alone sapped Spock's strength and he quieted after a moment. Kirk sat beside him, feeling him sink down into deep sleep once again. He pulled out the tricorder and ran a scan. The report came back immediately. Normal sleep, a deep Vulcan sleep, but normal. The word seemed to jump out of the screen at him. Normal. He had never thought of it as being a particularly beautiful word before, but it looked beautiful to him now.

Kirk flipped the tricorder lid down and, crossing the darkened room, lay down in his own bed and went back to sleep.

Consciousness came appropriately with the dawn. Kirk bent low over him and the first thing that Spock saw when he opened his eyes was the radiant smile that spread across Kirk's face.

"Welcome back, my friend."

Spock closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them again. "Jim?" He seemed puzzled, surprised that he was still alive.

"Yes." Kirk's eyes were filled with tenderness. "I didn't think I'd ever hear you speak my name again, Spock." There was a perceptible tremor in the Captain's voice.

Spock looked up at him for a moment, illogically allowing himself to bask in the joy that seemed to emanate from the Captain's entire body. Then he forced his mind back to more practical matters. He searched Kirk's face. "You do not look well. Are you all right?"

Kirk smiled at the predictable question. "Yes. I'm tired, that's all."

Spock saw the exhaustion in Kirk's eyes. "I am sorry that I have caused you so much distress."

Kirk patted him lightly on the arm. He made no answer.

A beam of light pierced the window, distracting Spock. His gaze left Kirk's face as he realized for the first time that they were no longer at the river. He searched the room as his thoughts rapidly crystallized into their familiar pattern. "What happened?"

"A group of natives found us at the river and carried you back here. An old shaman cured you with some potion mixed in a drink. Do you remember any of it?"

The Captain's words jogged Spock's memory and he weakly nodded as the memory of the incident came back to him. "Yes. Someone held by face and forced me to drink. It had a very bitter taste."

"If I'd been able, I would have prevented her from giving it to you. Thank God I was outnumbered."

Spock reached out to lay a hand across the Captain's arm. Kirk was painfully aware of how slow his movements were. "There was no way for you to know. I would have done the same thing if the situation had been reversed."

Kirk smiled and covered the Vulcan's hand with his own. "You just concentrate on regaining your strength. Then we'll figure out how to get back to the Enterprise." He looked down at Spock as if he still couldn't believe the evidence of his senses. He squeezed Spock's hand so tightly that it almost hurt. "God, it's good to hear your voice again."

Kirk brought in the food, carefully balancing the two bowls in one arm while holding the pitcher and drinking mugs in the other. He lay everything carefully on the floor and helped Spock to sit up. "Do you have any idea how difficult it is to get the idea of vegetarian stew across a language barrier?"

Raising an arm in the air, he forestalled the Vulcan's answer as he handed him his dinner. "It smells good though. Who knows," he smiled. "Maybe I'll develop a taste for it."

Spock studied the plate with interest. "Thank you, Captain. It does smell appetizing."

Kirk looked over at him, his spoon poised in the air. "Your appetite is back. That's a good sign."

"Indeed. I feel quite fit. Remarkable." Spock began to eat.

Kirk read the implication behind the words. "Don't try to push yourself. You may feel fit now, but you nearly died two days ago. Give yourself a little time."

Spock looked over at him, a faint smile on his face. "Yes, Sir." He attempted to roll up the sleeves of his shirt to keep them from falling into the bowl.

Kirk put his spoon down. "Here, let me help you with that." Folding the material into a tight circle, he pulled it up to Spock's elbows. "Not exactly the best fit, but it's a sight better than what was left of our uniforms."

"The Draconians have been most generous in sharing their possessions with us."

Kirk smiled, studying the blue tunic Spock wore. "And they even got the color right, at least for you. As for me," he looked down at the brown shirt, embroidered with some type of animal quills. A row of six-inch tassels hung down from the seam along each arm. "I feel like someone out of The Deerslayer." He glanced over at Spock. "James Fenimore Cooper, nineteenth century Earth."

Spock gave him an indulgent look. "I have heard of him, Captain."

Kirk shook his head. He should have known. "How many times have you read the book, Mr. Spock?"

"Once."

Kirk smiled into his stew. Of course. Spock never forgot anything. It would have been redundant to read it more than once.

They ate in silence for a few minutes. Slowly, Kirk's gaze drew distant, his mind on something far away. The spoon in his hand hovered before him, unnoticed. Spock turned toward him, a knowing look in his eyes.

"I wish I knew what was happening, Spock. I've been so concerned with your condition, there hasn't been time to speculate, but if the Klingons paid that Durinian ship to shoot us down, then they'll have required verification. And when they get it, they'll know our identities." He lowered the spoon, setting it carefully back in the bowl. "Do you think they'd dare enter Federation space to come after us?"

"This quadrant has extremely tenuous boundaries. I believe that the Klingons would chance a penetration in order to capture us."

Kirk nodded, Spock's opinion seconded his own. "That drug the shaman gave you would prove as important a discovery to the Klingons as it would to the Federation. It not only overpowered that infection, it somehow knit the bone and cured everything else that was wrong with you. If they find us, they're sure to learn about the medicine. That'll be the end of any peace on this planet."

Spock's expression saddened. "It would seem that we have irrevocably contaminated the Draconians. If the Enterprise finds us first, the Federation will be forced to provide Delta Draconis with military protection."

Kirk rose to his feet, putting the half eaten stew on the floor. "We were only eight hours shy of rendezvous when we were attacked. There are... " He paused for an instant. "... seventeen Class M planets between this one and the Enterprise's last reported position." He slapped his hands together. "There's no way we can really know how long each planet survey will take. If there are signs of similar humanoid lifeforms, it would upset the readings, making it difficult for ship's scanners to distinguish our readings from the others." He looked up at Spock. "What do you know about those planets? Is there any way you could give me a reasonable time estimate?"

Spock thought for a moment. "If memory serves, the planets range from two thousand to thirty-seven thousand miles in diameter. The Federation has had no reports of intelligent lifeforms on any of them, including Delta Draconis."

Kirk understood the inference. "And here they are." Pressing his lips together, he began to pace. "Therefore, we can assume that some of those planets may have humanoid lifeforms also and that Mr. Scott will have to take the added time to be certain that we're not down there with them."

"That would seem reasonable."

Kirk ran his fingers through his hair. "Judging by the size of the planets alone, how long will it take the Enterprise to run surface scans on all seventeen?"

Spock had already contemplated the problem. His answer was immediate. "Ninety-three hours."

"A little under four days. If nothing else slows him down."

Commander Kraithin stood, studying the star pattern spread out before him. The small Klingon vessel, built for speed and subtrufuge, had spent the past three days darting from one planet to the next, furtively making its way to Delta Draconis, careful to avoid Federation detection. Now, seventy-six hours after the mission had begun, she sat motionless, concealed behind a small unnamed planet as a Merakian ore freighter chugged past. The sturdy workhorse moved slowly and the Klingon ship would be forced to remain in hiding for at least six more hours until the ship passed out of scanning range. Kraithin watched silently, like a predator studying its prey, awaiting a moment to strike.

Kraithin's second in command approached him. The Commander looked up, recognizing the anticipation, the eagerness in his subordinate's face. "Patience, Yorin. We must be cautious to avoid being seen." He put a hand on the younger man's shoulder. "Do not fear. We will beat the Enterprise to Delta Draconis because," he smiled, revealing the shiny white teeth, "we have one large advantage over her. We know where we are going."

His smile broadened as he turned back to the viewer. "I will have you Kirk, because, unlike your precious Enterprise, I know exactly where you are." It was only when Yorin asked him to repeat the words that Kraithin realized he had spoken them aloud.

Spock was on his feet an hour later. The Captain considered trying to dissuade him at first, but, sensing Spock's need for independence, decided against it. He slipped an arm around Spock's waist, helping him to stand. Spock swayed unsteadily for a moment, then, spreading his feet, he found his balance and straightened. Glancing over at Kirk, a brief flash of pride illuminated his expression. Then it was gone. He eased out of the Captain's grasp and took a step forward. The break was nearly healed, but his strength would take longer to return. Spock's leg buckled under him, but Kirk's arm was around his waist again.

"Too much too soon, Mr. Spock. You should know better."

Spock sighed. "Indeed."

Kirk led him back to the bed and sat at his side. "We'll try again later."

They sat together for the next two hours, speaking softly to one another. Then, toward dusk, G'wai came in, a middle-aged woman at his side. He pointed to her, then to himself. "Chian'in kwai ztwa."

Spock nodded his head. "His wife, Captain. Her name is Chian'in." He spoke a few halting words in the Draconian tongue.

G'wai's eyes widened. Kirk mimicked his expression as he turned to stare at the Vulcan's averted face. "You understand the language?"

"A little." Spock almost looked embarrassed. "I can hear the people talking outside. All languages, no matter how foreign to the ear, have a certain universal order. Once that underlying unity is understood, the language itself is not difficult to learn."

Kirk watched him in amazement, but said nothing.

G'wai seemed delighted with Spock's new found ability and, pulling the woman forward, bombarded him with a barrage of words.

Spock held his hand up. "Twiazin,"

G'wai repeated the words at a much slower speed than before. Spock heard him out, then turned to the Captain. "I believe that G'wai wishes to know if I am well enough to join the people outside to eat." Spock's expression softened. "It seems that you have given them the impression that you will not leave here without me."

"I didn't want to get too far away in case you needed me."

Spock regarded him with an amused expression. The sound of voices grew louder and a head poked through the doorway. "I believe that they are waiting for us, Captain. Shall we?"

Kirk smiled. "Of course." He rose to his feet and, standing a few inches from Spock's side in order to reach out if the Vulcan lost his balance, walked with him out of the room.

The feast was a feast in name only. The food was adequate, but without seasoning. The people hardly seemed to notice as their attention was focused on their two guests. Kirk felt like he had been here for weeks, but realized with a start that, due to his cloistering with Spock, most of these people had not seen him until now.

Later in the evening, Spock surreptitiously rubbed his leg. Kirk noticed and, rising to his feet, managed to convey the idea that they were tired and wished to rest. G'wai smiled, the gaps in his teeth giving him a strangely ferocious appearance. He called for a young girl who had spent the entire evening standing along the outer edge of the firelight and she came forward and stood at his side, her eyes fixed on her toes.

"His daughter, Shiraz. She is our... attendant." Spock stiffened as Kirk helped him to his feet and the Captain looked at him anxiously. "The leg is still a bit weak. I shall be all right."

Kirk helped him back to their tiny room. Shiraz trailed behind them, her expression somewhere between abject embarrassment and avid curiosity.

Kirk positioned Spock by the bed. Shiraz stepped forward and made a move to help with his clothes. Kirk reached out and gently pushed her arm away. He smiled his most winning smile and she blushed furiously. Turning her around, he led her to the door. "Good night."

Smiling at the strange words, she paused uncertainly. Kirk gave her a gentle push and she finally got the message and quietly left the room.

The Captain watched her go, then turned to walk back and sit at Spock's side. Fixing him with a discerning look, he studied the Vulcan's impassive face. "Are you sure that you're all right?"

"Yes, Jim. There is only a slight discomfort in the newly-healed scar tissue. I can correct the problem." His eyes were distant and Kirk sat, leaning forward on his elbows, waiting for Spock to discuss what was troubling him.

After a moment, the Vulcan refocused on his face. "Jim, if the Klingons arrive here before the Enterprise, they will pose a grave threat to the Draconians. We must prepare them for that eventuality." His eyes were filled with sorrow at the change they had brought to this world.

Kirk studied his saddened face. The Draconians were a warrior people, but from what little he had been able to see, warfare was rare. That would surely change if the Klingons arrived first. "Do you think you understand the language well enough to get the idea across?"

"Yes."

The outer door creaked open and the soft footsteps that both men now recognized as belonging to G'wai entered the outer room. There was the sound of chair legs being moved across the uneven wooden floor, then silence again filled the house.

Kirk looked at the tattered curtain, his own expression saddened now, but also resigned to the facts of the matter. He rose to his feet and approached the doorway. G'wai's voice came softly from the other room, unobtrusive as usual. Pulling the curtain to one side, Kirk caught the Draconian's gaze and motioned him inside. When G'wai stood before him, he turned to Spock. The Vulcan's eyes mirrored his pain. Slowly, in halting words, Spock began relating the story of the Federation and the Klingon Empire and the threat they posed to the peace of the simple Draconian people.

The next three days passed uneventfully. Spock's recovery left the Captain shaking his head in astonishment and late in the second day, the cast came off his leg. Earlier in the same day, Spock had removed the cast encasing Kirk's ribs to the wonderment of several of the natives who watched from a discrete distance. G'wai had sat near them, watching the Vulcan's impassive face tighten with worry as he eased the bandage off with infinite gentleness. G'wai could sense that Spock was far more sensitive to Kirk's pain than he was to his own and the realization filled his mind with strange and disturbing thoughts.

Oblivious to the scrutiny, Spock let out an audible sigh when he finished. Running the tricorder over the area of the breaks, the Vulcan, with a hint of pride in his eyes, pronounced the Captain healed.

Kirk rose to his feet and walked experimentally across the room. He took a deep breath and slapped his open hands against his sides.

Spock flinched. Kirk saw the gesture but pretended to ignore it. He smiled his best diplomatic smile. "Now that I'm fit," he gave Spock a knowing look, "as you said so yourself, I'm going down to the shuttlecraft and get what we'll need to build a communicator."

Spock's mouth compressed into a frown. He made no response. Kirk ignored that too. "We can't take a chance on sending out an open message so we'll use the Calarian signal code. The tricorder will give you enough information to accurately calculate the frequency and intensity of the solar flares. Once we have the calculations, we can tie in the tricorder and start to broadcast."

"Allow me to make the tricorder readings before you go, Captain. If the magnetic disruptions are intense, they will white out our signal."

"That will take hours, Spock. I can be down to the Columbus and back by then." Kirk, restored to health and relieved of the worry over Spock, was growing impatient to take some direct action toward resolving their situation. The Calarian code was a long-shot, but it was their best alternative. It was designed for just such a situation as they were in now, marooned on a planet with no way of knowing if friendly or enemy forces would pick up their message. The code was formulated to mimic the ultraviolet radiation put out by solar flares, the signal deliberately random so as not to alert a potential enemy that the message was present. The intense electromagnetic waves would act as a propulsion, carrying the low energy beacon along with them as they passed the planet and spread out into the empty space beyond. Theoretically, the distress call would be hidden in the barrage of solar radiation and would go undetected by anyone unfamiliar with the pattern of signals.

"Tell me what you'll need."

Spock rose to his feet so rapidly that he lost his balance and would have fallen had Kirk not caught him. He put on his most severe Vulcan face. "Captain, if the Klingons do come after us, the Columbus will be the first place they will look."

"Spock, we've already discussed that. Even if they do come, we don't know when or where they'll beam down. In the meantime, we could be signalling the Enterprise."

"It's too dangerous."

Kirk grew irritated. "I'll take precautions, Mr. Spock." His voice was sharp and the Vulcan stiffened in response.

G'wai, understanding the tone in their voices, rose to stand beside Spock. He spoke to the Vulcan and Spock answered, his eyes never leaving the Captain's. G'wai spoke again and called several others to his side. Shiraz scampered forward, her eyes fairly glowing with lovesickness, staring adoringly into Kirk's face. Spock turned to G'wai and glared.

Kirk smiled. "I don't speak the language, Mr. Spock, but am I correct in assuming that I have an escort?"

Spock turned back to him, his icy expression intact. For a moment, he did not answer. "Yes."

Kirk slapped his hands together. "Splendid. You let me know what you need and I'll be back in three hours."

"I shall go with you."

The Captain's smile vanished. "You're not steady on your feet. You almost fell here a moment ago."

Spock lifted his jaw, a slight gesture that Kirk recognized as indicating profound disapproval.

"Mr. Spock, I will take enough men to adequately assist me."

Spock did not respond. It was clear that the Captain had made up his mind to go and equally clear that Spock would not be allowed to go along. And so, a few moments later, Spock stood forlornly at the edge of the village, leaning on his good leg, watching Kirk depart with the natives. It was only after they had long vanished from his sight that he reluctantly turned and made his way back to their tiny room.

Kirk and party came back three hours and twenty-three minutes later to find Spock standing uncomfortably on one leg at the forest edge. Kirk smiled. "I thought you were supposed to be working on our problem."

"I am."

Kirk could feel the worry permeate from the Vulcan's rigid body. "Spock, you would sense it if anything... unforeseen happened."

"Perhaps. I am not completely certain of that fact."

Like hell. "So you worry. That isn't very logical."

Spock changed the subject. "Did you find anything?"

Kirk let him dodge the statement. "We may have to do a little creative circuitry, but I think we have enough here to build a transmitter." He held out the finely woven blanket cradled in his arm. Carefully wrapped in a cloth were a myriad of wires, conductors and circuits. "We'll have to cannibalize the tricorder, of course, but it can't be helped."

Spock examined the components with interest. After a moment of intense scrutiny, he looked up. "Yes, Captain. It is possible."

Kirk smiled. "Of course it is, Mr. Spock. Come on." He gathered up the equipment and, with Spock at his side, walked slowly back into the village, his step measured by the Vulcan's slowed gait.

Unnoticed, G'wai trailed behind them, his eyes fixed on their backs. He followed them inside the room that was now their home and sat unobtrusively by the doorway as they worked. They spoke to one another infrequently. Their concentration was now in their work. When they did speak, their voices were low. G'wai watched in fascination. Kirk handed Spock a tool and G'wai noted the different colors of the skin as they brushed against one another. Reacting to that touch, Kirk looked up at the Vulcan and smiled.

They worked in this way for hours and G'wai was not oblivious to the change that came over their expressions when they looked at one another. G'wai had seen the expression before, of course. Love and friendship were not strangers in his world, but never had he seen it between beings so different from one another.

After a time, he could stay silent no longer and rose to stand beside them. The men stopped what they were doing and fixed their gazes on him. "Among my people, we are taught to fear those who are different."

His eyes darted back and forth between them, then settled on the Captain. "You are not even of the same race."

Kirk, not understanding G'wai's words, looked at Spock questioningly. G'wai continued to speak. "Here, we war with our enemies, those that look different. Their bodies, their clothes, the things they eat, all are strange and confusing. There are the Zianim, who have level eyes like you and the Tceopati, whose hair is the color of the night sky and do not cook their food, but eat the meat raw. It is said of the Tceopati that they eat the children born to them that are not perfect." His eyes grew distant for a moment. "I have never believed such things. How can a father eat his child, even if it has a withered arm? Such a thing cannot be possible."

He focused his eyes back on them. "Always we have warred with them, but the wars are rare. They live far away. Our people live in villages scattered within two days walk of here." He inclined his head. "We have spoken of this."

Spock nodded.

"The others, they live far away. The Tceopati eighteen days walk to the south, the Zianim, eleven days to the east, along the shores of the Great Sea." He held an arm up in the air, revealing the puckered scar that spread across the length of the forearm. "This is my mark of leadership. When I was young, I led the men of my village to the Great Sea and we fought a mighty battle with the Zianim. I killed a Zianim warrior who left me with this mark of courage."

"Because of the gift of the Sachsuam, we must learn to kill quickly. The Sachsuam saves the life if the injury lingers. So we have learned to finish a job without mercy." He stopped speaking and fixed Spock with a penetrating stare. "We would have killed you at the river. You are even more different than the Zianim or the Tceopati. But," he looked over at Kirk and a confused expression came into his eyes. "He is as different from you as you are from us. He could have run away, but he stayed, stood before you like a great tree with roots deep into the earth. There were many of us, but he did not falter. Then, later, when we were back in the village, he stayed at your side for two days. I tried to make him understand about the medicine woman, but he did not know what I meant. He was afraid we would hurt you. He brought grave offense to the Keeper of the Sachsuam when he spoke to her. He fought us when she gave you the Sachsuam. He did not understand that we meant only to heal you."

Spock looked down at the hands folded on his lap. He was aware of Kirk's scrutiny, but did not look up at him.

G'wai persisted. "For two days he stayed at your side. He spoke to you many times. Never have I heard such pain in a voice. Why would he care so much about you when you are so different?"

"He is my friend." Spock spoke the words as if they explained everything."

G'wai looked at him. Then he nodded his head. The words did, in fact, explain it all. "Yes. I begin to see." He rose to his feet and walked slowly to the door. Pausing momentarily, he turned back to Spock. "I had a friend, a friend of my childhood. He was killed in that battle of the Great Sea. He could have been such a friend to me, one who would have stayed by my side during my illness. But he has been lost to me for many years. I look around my village and I see other young people who always walk together. Their eyes soften when they look at one another and they remind me of you." His eyes grew distant again. "Is it possible that they will die for no reason? Our wars, they are about nothing... nothing at all..." His expression grew sorrowful and he walked quietly from the room.

Spock watched the doorway for a long time. Kirk, sensing that something of significance had occurred, did not interrupt his thoughts. Finally, Spock turned back to him.

"What was that all about?"

Spock studied his face for a moment. "He wanted to know why you didn't run away at the riverbank."

Kirk met his gaze evenly. He had, of course, not told Spock about the more dangerous aspects of the meeting. When the Vulcan did not elaborate, he spoke again. "And what did you tell him?"

"I said you were my friend."

Kirk nodded. Spock's response pleased him. "A good answer, Mr. Spock."

"Nothing, Mr. Scott." Chekov's shoulders were slumped as he relayed the depressingly familiar report.

Scott did not look over at him. His eyes remained locked on the viewscreen. "Mr. Sulu, what is the next planet on our search pattern?"

Sulu answered immediately. He had plotted the course hours ago. "Delta Draconis, Mr. Scott. 8.2 parsecs distant."

"Delta Draconis." McCoy repeated the words softly.

At the sound of his voice, Scott looked over. The Doctor's presence was so frequent now that for an instant he had forgotten McCoy was there.

McCoy looked down at him. "Delta Draconis. Fourth star of the constellation of the dragon. In Greek, that's what it means."

Scott, of course, knew what it meant but, recognizing the Doctor's need to talk, did not interrupt him.

McCoy continued to speak. "Jim always did have a fondness for Greek culture. Did you know that he even has an antique copy of The Odyssey? Told me once he

preferred it to The Iliad because it dealt with exploration, not warfare." McCoy's jaw trembled at the recollection. "He must have read it a dozen times. Spock gave it to him. Did you know that?" He looked over at Scott and his eyes were filled with tears. "I remember that day. Two years ago, when we were in overhaul on Starbase Eleven. Spock found it somewhere and surprised him with it. Jim's face lit up like a Christmas tree." He shook his head. "Crazy Vulcan. Just when you think you've got him figured out, he goes and does something like that." McCoy's composure wavered and he turned his face away.

Scott reached out to touch his arm. "We'll find them, Doctor."

McCoy turned back to him just as Chekov finished his final scan. Seeing the navigator shake his head, the Doctor took a deep breath. "I'll be in the Sickbay. Call me when we get to Draconis. I want to be here."

Turning on his heel, he walked to the turbolift, his gaze straight ahead. When he stopped inside, McCoy did not turn around, but stood facing the wall as the doors closed. For an instant before the view was cut off, Scott could see the Doctor's shoulders begin to slump. Biting back a sense of sorrow and crushing despair, he turned back to the viewer. "Take us out of orbit, Mr. Sulu. Set course for Delta Draconis."

"Aye, Sir."

The mighty ship spun gracefully away from the planet below. Scott waited impatiently for the star sector to appear before him again. He could see the tiny star in the distance, its small size making it seem farther away than the larger suns that surrounded it. Revolving around it was a world he could not even see, Delta Draconis.

Kirk and Spock sat before the table, their shoulders touching. They had worked by firelight throughout the night and now, with the dawning of the new day, the communicator was nearly finished. Spock bent forward, studying the tricorder screen. "Captain, solar flares are remarkably quiescent at the moment. The signal will not be drowned out by the intensity of the ultraviolet radiation. With the electromagnetic propulsion, the communicator will have a range of 8.7 parsecs."

"The Enterprise could easily be within that distance."

"Quite true." Anticipation was strong in the air.

Kirk looked over at Spock. "When will it be ready?"

"I have a few more adjustments to make. Then we can test it."

Pushing the outer door open with one shoulder, Shiraz came into the room, a tray of food balanced precariously in her hands. Kirk looked up and gave her such a dazzling smile that she nearly stumbled. Clutching at the tray, she flushed, the change in pigmentation giving her skin a peculiar mauve appearance. Kirk, oblivious to the poor girl's infatuation, cleared a space for her at the table and took the tray from her quaking hands.

Spock adjusted a tiny circuit, his brow furrowed in concentration as he tried to work with a handmade tool. Then his hand slipped and the wire was severed neatly in half.

Spock stared at the tear, a furious expression on his face. Kirk half-expected him to swear.

"A most inexcusable error, Captain. I am over anxious. I should have slowed my pace."

Kirk touched his arm. "It's all right. What do you need to repair it?"

"A length of grade seven coil, 8.44 centimeters long." Spock clenched his fists in frustration.

"It's all right. There's more of it in the Columbus. I'll go down and get it."

Spock rose to his feet. "It was my error. I will go."

"No." I'll make better time. Besides, you can be finishing up while I'm gone."

Spock looked over at him and his eyes opened a fraction wider than usual. "You will take some villagers with you?"

"They're down at lower fields, Spock. Today is the day that they plant the soybeans, remember? I'll take Shiraz." He smiled at her and her eyes grew enormous. He looked over at Spock, well aware by the expression in his face that he was not placated. "Don't worry."

He patted Spock lightly on the arm, then turned, and with Shiraz trailing at a properly worshipful distance, quickly stepped out into the bright mountain sunlight and was gone.

The shuttlecraft leaned against the trees beside it, balanced on one end, apparently read to topple over any second. The tricorder had assured him on his first visit back to the Columbus that, despite its precarious appearance, the ship was solidly wedged among the trees and in no danger of collapse. The natives, of course, believed the truth of their own senses over the instrument's report and gave the wreck a wide berth.

Kirk, ignoring what his eyes told him, entered the narrow opening and began once again to search the interior. He made his way to the communication control and began to examine the twisted wires, looking for the coil Spock needed.

Shiraz pushed her head through the entrance. She too was fearful of the vessel but her infatuation with Kirk drove her forward and she moved to stand beside him. She spoke a long string of words to him, none of which he understood. Stopping, she waited expectantly. Kirk smiled and shrugged. The gesture elicited a high-pitched giggle, the sound incongruous in comparison to the guttural words

that had preceded it. She pointed toward the woods, and, bunching her hands together, brought an imaginary bundle to her face and inhaled deeply.

Kirk nodded, looking behind her. The hillside beyond was covered with a profusion of wildly colored marsh flowers. "Go ahead. I'll call you when I'm ready to go."

She canted her head to one side. He waved her away and she smiled and moved off. After a few steps, her stride widened into a graceful lope and, watching her, Kirk envied the simple lifestyle that she led. She moved through the meadow with the grace and naturalness of a wild animal and he sighed, a part of his mind tempting him with the thought that he could do worse than be lost on such a planet. Then, with a flash of guilt, he turned back to his work.

It took him longer than expected to find the length of wire Spock required. Most of the remaining circuits were burned and fused and he had to search the entire panel before he found what he needed. Carefully wrapping his find in a piece of torn padding, he turned toward the entrance. Suddenly, a blinding white light illuminated the entire interior of the shuttlecraft, engulfing him within its beam, ripping through his body like a phaser bolt. The force lifted him off his feet and sent him crashing against the far wall. He fell heavily to one side, his mind encased in a white fog. Hands grabbed him, twisting his arms behind his back, pulling him out into the sunlight. He heard the metallic click of the wrist restraints locking into place an instant before a hand grabbed his hair and twisted his head in what felt like a ninety degree angle.

The Klingon face was inches away from his own. The swarthy lips parted in a joyless smile. "We finally meet, Captain Kirk. I have heard a great deal about you and now on this lovely planet, I meet you at last."

Several Klingons, armed with surveillance equipment, circled the Columbus, examining its interior and hull, seeking information on Federation technology. Kraithin continued to hold his head back at a painful angle, making it difficult to breathe. He studied Kirk intently for a moment. "You're smaller than I thought you would be. I half-expected you to stand eight feet tall." He laughed. "Do you have any idea how valuable you will be in furthering my career? Every secret you divulge will add another step to my rank."

Seeing the defiance in Kirk's eyes, he tightened his grip on the Captain's hair. "You think you will resist us Kirk, but you are wrong. The mind scanner will pick your brain apart and all of your Starfleet training will be powerless to fight it. You will give us a flood of information." Kraithin laughed again. "A veritable flood. I shall drown in it."

A Klingon soldier emerged from the Columbus and walked to Kraithin's side. "Commander, we have picked up bloodstains from the interior of the shuttlecraft."

"Human?" Kraithin turned to look at him.

"No, Commander. Vulcan."

Kraithin looked back at Kirk, his eyes glittering at the added prize. "Well, well, Vulcan. I wonder who that could be."

He barked a few words to the Klingon at his side. The man lifted a device that Kirk took to be similar to his own tricorder and held it out before him. Turning his body in a full circle, he pointed the monitor on the line of the horizon. When he had made a complete revolution, he looked at the Klingon commander and shook his head.

The grip on Kirk's hair tightened. The Captain was his prize, but he was not unaware of Spock's value. Certain members of the Imperial High Command would give a great deal to have such a prisoner. Kraithin saw his own vistas expanding once again. "Where is he?"

Kirk stared him squarely in the eye. He made no answer.

Kraithin jerked his head back, a sudden snap that stopped just short of breaking his neck. "I can find him with my ship's sensors, but I would rather have it from you. Save yourself a lot of pain, Kirk. Tell me where he is."

The Captain stared at him defiantly. The Federation had very little factual information on Klingon technology, but he gambled that the Klingons were too martial to devote much attention to the more scientific pursuits. Their weapons and shielding were first rate, but they were, after all, a poor empire, one that relied on conquest and plunder to compensate for shortages at home. Their entire expenditures were devoted to warfare and weaponry. There was little left over for the finer, more sophisticated technology. What they couldn't steal, they did without. Kirk's intuition told him that the Klingon was bluffing about the precision of his ship's scanners. He concentrated, trusting that Spock would sense his predicament through the distance that separated them and would be able to bring help undetected by Klingon sensors. However, even without Klingon interference, it would take them over an hour to reach the river. Kirk gambled that he could survive Klingon interrogation for that long.

His eyes hardened. "Go to hell."

The dark face grew mottled. Kraithin motioned to the soldiers standing on either side of Kirk and they pulled him backwards, knocking his feet out from under him. The Klingons held him against the ground at his shoulders and ankles. One Klingon knelt by his head and pulled out a small device that he had seen once before. Kraithin leaned over him. "I'll ask you one more time. Where is he?"

Kirk closed his eyes, driving all thoughts but that of reaching Spock from his mind. The neural stimulator made a faint buzzing noise as it approached his face.

Spock shook his head and turned away from his work. The sensation was mild at first, echoing within his mind like the buzzing of a mosquito. He looked toward the river.

The sensation grew stronger and became unmistakable. He rose to his feet, allowing the tools lying on his lap to tumble to the floor, but he paid them no attention. He walked from the house, stopping by the door to gather up two of G'wai's crude wooden clubs. A knife blade reflected in his eyes and he hesitated

only a moment before picking it up and carefully slipping it into the thick Draconian belt circling his waist.

He stepped outside and made his way to the edge of the settlement, his eyes locked on a point in the distance. Someone called his name and he turned to see G'wai trotting across the square. Brushing the dirt from his hands, G'wai grinned, the smile dying on his lips when he saw the Vulcan's expression. His gaze darted down to the weapons in Spock's hands. "What has happened?" There was a tinge of fear in his voice.

"The Klingons have come. The Captain has been taken prisoner. I must go."

He took a step away and G'wai reached out to stop him. The sense of suppressed rage and power that vibrated off the Vulcan's arm shocked him and he jerked his arm away. But there was also a terrible vulnerability and fear within the strength that G'wai could sense and it tempered the fear that Spock had just instilled in him. G'wai reached out to touch him again. "You cannot go alone." He looked around the deserted square. "I will go for the others. You must wait."

"No." Spock pulled away. "I must go now. Gather your men and follow me. You're their leader, not I. You know the lay of the land. Assess the situation and do what you must." Spock began to walk quickly away.

"How many Klingons are there?"

Spock turned back to him. "The question is irrelevant. The Captain needs help and I will go. Follow when you can." Then he turned and ran down the trail as fast as his newly healed leg would allow him.

Kraithin leaned over the Human, running a coarse hand over the soaked tunic and brushing damp hair away from his brow. "Kirk?" He whispered, his voice soft and friendly. "Tell me where he is."

The Captain lay back, gulping huge lungsfull of air. Watching him, the Klingong ground his teeth together. The planet was large, impossible to cover by visual observation. His men had scouted the area of the crash and had come up with nothing, but scattered footprints leading into the hillside and vanishing.

He ran a finger lightly along the smooth face beneath him. "Where is he, Kirk."

The Captain looked up at him and his eyes cleared. "On Wrigley's Pleasure Planet having the time of his life."

Kraithin smiled at Kirk's continued defiance. "Very amusing, Captain." He turned to his subordinate once again. "Kraith, resume."

During the exchange, the Klingon who knelt by Kirk's head had been fondling a flower that grew at his feet. Plucking it, he crushed the delicate seed head in his hand. Then, brushing his palms against the sides of his pants, he picked up the stimulator and resumed his work.

Spock was halfway to the 'shuttlecraft when Shiraz found him. She grabbed his arm, pointing down the trail behind her. Her eyes were wide with terror and the words tumbled from her mouth in a chaotic flow.

Spock put his hands to her face, holding her still. "How many were there?"

"Many. Fifteen, twenty." Her eyes darted back and forth as her mind replayed the vision. "Ugly, horrible creatures. They had a box that spit out a white light. It covered the ship. Then they pulled him out. He couldn't walk. They hit him, knocked him down." Her eyes were distraught. "I was afraid and I ran away. I should have stayed to help him but I was afraid."

"It's all right. You couldn't have done anything by yourself." He turned her toward the village. "Tell G'wai what you have told me."

"You cannot go! There are too many!" Shiraz called the words out into the air, but Spock had already turned away and she watched in silent terror as he disappeared around a curve in the trail.

Kirk lay on the ground, Kraithin stood over him, watching as the neural stimulator was applied again and again to his face. After an hour, it was becoming difficult for the Captain to keep from crying out, but he kept his silence, more in an effort to shield his suffering from Spock than to deny the Klingons the pleasure of hearing him scream. He knew that the more he externalized his pain, the more it would serve to interfere with Spock's concentration. He understood that, in a strange way, he was Spock's achilles' heel, his one fatal weakness, the one emotional reality that the Vulcan could not shut out. Weakened by his illness, facing eight heavily armed Klingon soldiers, Spock could not afford any distractions.

Pulling against the restraints, Kirk cursed their Klingon strength as the stimulator came down on him again.

Kraithin watched him twist under the relentless sensory assault. The game was growing tiresome to him now. Flushed with impatience, Kraithin wanted results. He cast a glance at his subordinate who was monitoring Kirk's vital signs. The other Klingon looked up at him and nodded.

"Enough."

The stimulator was pulled away from his face, leaving an ugly red welt in its place. Kraithin bent down over the gasping form. "Tell me where he is, Captain."

Kirk opened his eyes and looked up at him. "I'll see you in hell first, you son of a bitch."

Shrieking out his frustration, Kraithin struck Kirk savagely across the face. He nodded to the man at his left and the stimulator came down again. Kirk

watched it with detachment until it touched his skin and sent the raging fire through every nerve ending in his body.

Spock stood at the treeline. He could see the Klingons surrounding the shuttlecraft, could feel Kirk's pain through the distance between them. Shiraz, in her terror, had seen more Klingons than were actually there. Spock counted eight, clustered in a loose circle around the Columbus. Holding a club tightly in his hand, he followed the line of the hillside, crouching when the ridge grew shallow, straightening up when it deepened and allowed him more room.

Reaching the ridge end, he dropped to his hands and knees. Pulling the brightly colored Draconian tunic up over his head, he tossed it to one side and slowly crawled through the thick underbrush, his progress slowed by the alert Klingon soldiers continually scanning the horizon. The distinct sounds of a Klingon communicator blared out through the quiet meadow, distracting the men. As they turned toward the Columbus, Spock darted forward and, locking his hands around the throat of the Klingon nearest to him, he snapped the neck so cleanly that it made no sound at all. Silently he lowered the Klingon to the ground, catching the disrupter that fell from the man's limp fingers.

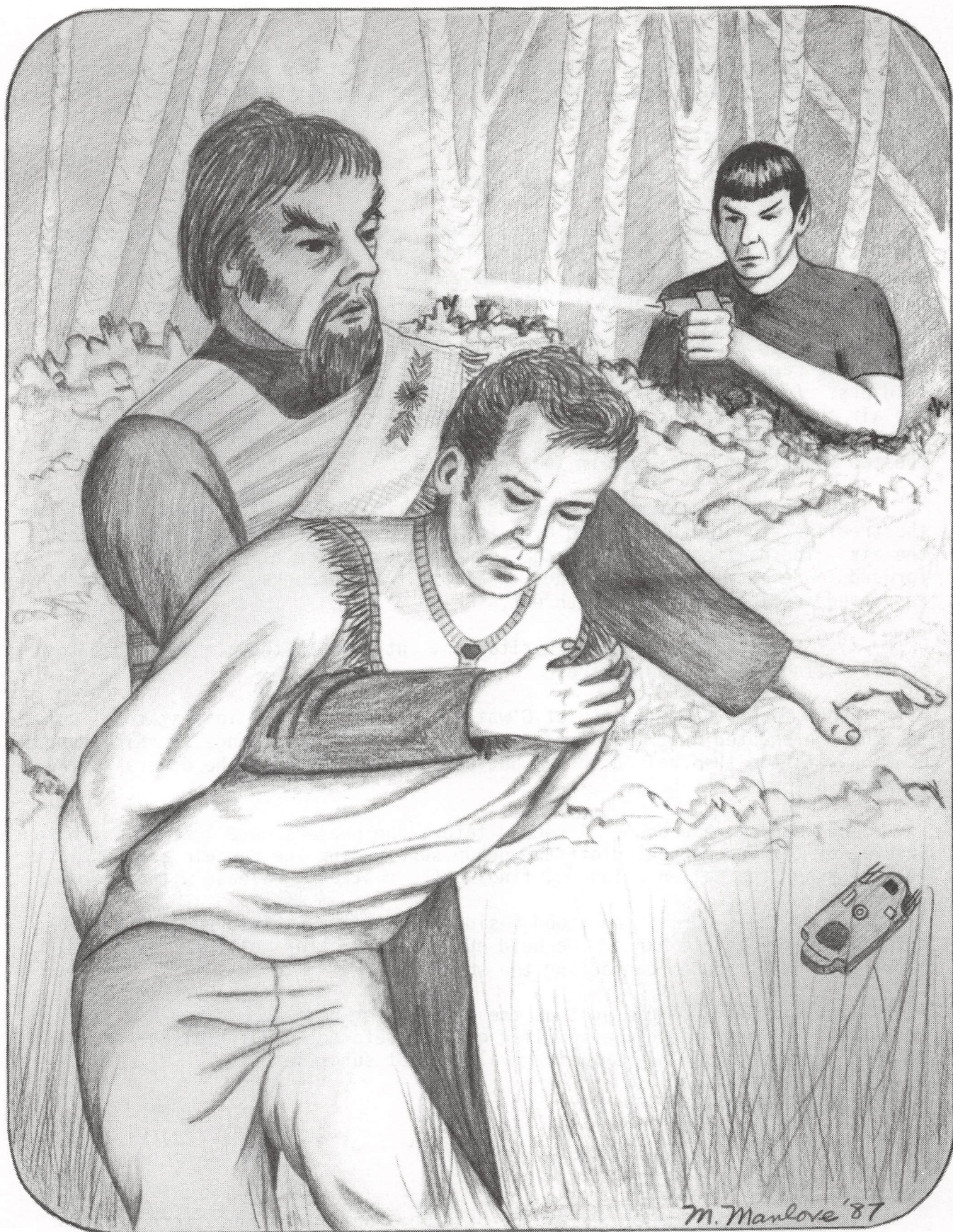
He heard the soldier aboard the Klingon vessel report, his voice high-pitched and agitated, that the Enterprise was approaching Delta Draconis. Kraithin cursed loudly, obviously frustrated that his interrogation would turn up empty. He would have to take his prize and leave before the Enterprise spotted his ship. The small Klingon craft was no match for a Class One Cruiser. Waving his men in, he bellowed into the communicator, ordering his transporter room to prepare to beam up. Kirk was pulled to his feet, visibly sagging in the soldier's grip. Spock raised the disrupter upward. The knowledge that Klingon weapons had no stun setting did not disturb him. Seeing Kirk swaying in the steely Klingon grip, Spock was in a mood to kill. The wooden club fell silently to the ground. His eyes black with fury, he aimed the weapon at the center of Kraithin's head and fired.

The bolt sent the Klingon reeling backwards. The communicator skidded across the meadow, the frantic voice of the shipbound soldier fading as the device buried itself in the tall grass. Kraithin was dead before he hit the ground.

The soldiers standing around him pulled out their disrupters, reacting instinctively to the attack. Spinning in unison, they turned toward Spock and lowered their weapons on him.

Spock dove out of the way as four disrupters were aimed at his face. Kirk, taking in the situation immediately, twisted his left arm forward, driving the Klingon holding it out in front of Spock. The man, caught unprepared by Kirk's sudden recovery, staggered forward, stopping directly before Spock at the instant the Klingon weapons were fired. He caught the disrupter blasts aimed at the Vulcan against his own body, twisting and jerking for an instant as he stood suspended between the intersecting bolts of energy.

Pulling himself from the other Klingon's grip, Kirk slammed him in the side, driving him backward into the arms of his four compatriots. The force of the blow deflected their aim, giving Spock the crucial half-second he needed.



"Jim, down!"

Kirk twisted away and flattened himself against the ground as Spock's disrupter whined, sending repeated bolts of energy over his head, centering on the heart of the group. With a simultaneous shriek of agony, the Klingons fell to the ground and lay still.

The entire battle lasted seven seconds.

Spock ran to Kirk's side as the Captain pulled himself up onto his knees, his gaze on the silent Klingon soldiers littering the meadow. At that instant, the familiar shimmering beam of the transporter sparkled in a wide arc around the center of the battle area. The meadow was suddenly filled with a sea of red-shirted Enterprise security guards. Materializing in the act of lowering themselves into a crouching defensive maneuver, the men stopped in mid-motion, seeing the Captain and Spock kneeling in the midst of a pile of unmoving Klingon soldiers. For an instant their Starfleet training failed them as silence filled the air and the soft cheeping of a songbird drifted across the meadow. Then the security team roused themselves from their momentary shock and converged on the two men struggling to their feet before them.

They were only a few feet away when a solid line of Draconians burst from the treeline, their clubs raised over their heads, their wild screams filling the air. The natives, mistaking the security guards for Klingons, rushed forward in defense of their friends. Raising their phasers, the security men responded instinctively to the threat.

Kirk's voice, sharp and authoritarian, cut through the air and froze them in mid-motion. "No! Don't fire!"

Spock spun around to look at G'wai, standing near them in a state of confusion. He shouted a string of words in the Draconian's strange, foreign tongue. G'wai hesitated, then raised an arm out behind him, stopping the others who had answered his call for help.

The weapons came down. A second later, the phasers were lowered in response. Several of the guards peeled off the group surrounding the Captain and Spock. They searched the fallen Klingons, finding the restraint release within seconds.

One of the security men stood beside Kirk as the Captain rubbed the circulation back into his hands. He held out a communicator to Kirk. "Welcome back, Sir. Will you be contacting the ship?"

Kirk took it from him just as the transporter beam hummed again a dozen feet away. He recognized the familiar outline before the materialization was complete and smiled. The abrupt arrival did not surprise him.

"Hello, Bones."

McCoy stood in the center of the Briefing Room. His hands were clasped behind his back and he was bouncing up and down.

"Jim, I've just completed my analysis of the medication that shaman gave to Spock and I can't believe what I've found." His eyes glowed with excitement. "It's an herb derivative, but I can't pin it down any closer as to Earth equivalents. It's electrochemical structure is totally unique to this world. The plant's found only in certain sectors of the higher elevations, but it's not rare, not by any means!"

"This herb has the ability to combat infection like nothing I've ever seen before. And not only does it combat infection, it heals every traumatic injury present in the body at the time it is administered. It'll take me weeks of laboratory analysis to figure out just how it does all this, but the results of the tests I've run on Spock so far show the potential it has." He turned his eyes on the Vulcan, who had been sitting quietly, his hands folded before him, his gaze on the Doctor.

"It's no wonder the Draconians weren't worried when they brought you back to the village, Mr. Spock. If you survive the first few hours, until they can get the medicine to you, it's virtually impossible to die from internal injuries. And the medicine reacts to the entire physiology, correcting any traumatic damage within the organism."

McCoy turned back to Kirk. "If I hadn't seen it for myself, I wouldn't have believed it. It's no wonder the shamans are revered. They process the stuff, pass the secret of its preparation on from one generation to the next. As far as I can determine, no one else on Draconis knows what plants are used. They treat the old ladies with the reverence of high priests."

He ran a hand across his forehead, then looked up at the Captain. "This is a find of incalculable importance. It will save billions of lives. Starfleet will have to override the Prime Directive to give us access to it." His voice was pleading.

Kirk watched him for a moment in silence. The Klingon vessel that had brought those soldiers to Delta Draconis had warped out of orbit immediately upon the arrival of the Enterprise. She would be safely within Klingon-dominated space by this time, undoubtedly relating the tale of how she had come to lose half of her contingent. The Klingons did not like defeat and would be certain, sometime, to take their revenge out on the defenseless planet.

Kirk rose to his feet. "Mr. Spock and I have already discussed it, Doctor, and expressed our recommendations to Starfleet Command. The Klingons will not let the matter rest. They will be a threat to the Draconians and, because it was our presence that has endangered the natives, Starfleet will be duty bound to protect the people. In that regard, the Sachsuam is irrelevant to Starfleet's decision.

Seeing McCoy's horrified expression, Kirk gave him a gentle smile. "I think you will get your permission, Bones. Starfleet will see the importance of your discovery."

The buzz of the intercom cut into his words. Reaching down, he flipped the switch. "Kirk here."

"Captain, Uhura here, Sir. I am receiving a message from Starfleet Command,"

Kirk's gaze rose to meet McCoy's. "Pipe it down here, Lieutenant."

He heard the switch as the signal passed over his channel. The noise seemed loud in the quiet of the Briefing Room.

The face of Admiral Morrison, Starfleet Official in charge of the quadrant, appeared before him. He smiled. Behind him, Kirk could sense McCoy relax.

"Captain, I have just received correspondence from the Federation Council's Subcommittee on Prime Directive Enforcement. It is their opinion that, due to the fact that the planet was made a battleground, so to speak, between forces of the Federation and the Klingon Empire, any Starfleet contamination was unavoidable. Furthermore, as Draconis IV was drawn into the hostility, it is our opinion that the planet receive protective status due to possible Klingon retaliation."

Morrison's eyes sought out McCoy. "Captain. You are authorized to beam down and open up negotiations with the Draconian leaders." He paused. "I understand that the planet is composed of small tribal groupings."

"Yes, Admiral. The population is relatively sparse and there is little interaction between the various groups. However, due to the disparate racial types on the planet, those encounters are of a violent nature."

"They war on one another."

"Yes, Admiral."

Morrison's expression tightened. "That will make negotiations difficult. You'll have to try to work something out, Captain. We need authority figures in order to negotiate a formal arrangement. As you know, we still have to take precautions against a cultural overload. A few people at a time, introduction to the larger universe a step at a time. We can't do that without help from the planet." He fixed Kirk with an appraising look. "Do you think you can work something out, Captain?"

Kirk smiled, aware of McCoy's eyes boring holes through the center of his back. "Yes, Sir. I believe we have reason to hope for success."

"Good. Let me know how things progress. Morrison out."

McCoy turned to stare into the viewscreen. It was clear that his mind was spinning a thousand directions at once. After a moment, he turned back to Kirk. "Well, don't just stand there! Go down and get me that treaty!"

G'wai was awaiting them at the river. He had seen enough transporting by this time to react without too much excitement as the two forms materialized in front of him.

Kirk took a step forward. "Mr. Spock, will you explain to G'wai about the Federation proposal?"

Spock moved to G'wai's side and began what turned out to be a long and involved discussion. Nearly an hour passed before the conversation trailed off. Spock turned back to the Captain. "He says he will act as liaison to the other tribes. He fears that they will kill him however, and requests that we send some security men to accompany him in his mission."

Kirk looked into his expressionless face. "It has a familiar ring to it, doesn't it, Mr. Spock?"

A flash of sorrowful resignation showed for an instant in the Vulcan eyes. "Yes, Captain." *Must it always be so.* The words passed through his mind in a fraction of a second but, looking up at the Captain, he could see the empathy in Kirk's expression.

Kirk touched Spock lightly on the arm. "It's a beginning. It's something."

A faint smile showed around the corners of the severe mouth. "Yes, Jim. It is indeed."

G'wai stood watching them speak together. Reaching a tentative hand out, he laid it across Kirk's arm. They both turned away from each other to look at him. His eyes searched their faces, marvelling again at the differences between them, watching as the different hair, eye and skin color, the disparate weight and height and body shape, the diverse background and native language seemed to fade away and disappear. He saw them for what they truly were, realizing that the image would change his life, and perhaps the lives of all of his people. In one part of his mind the thought frightened him, for he knew that things were simpler before they had come to disturb his primitive world. But then he remembered his friend, dead these many years, and the ache within his chest, the loneliness that had not faded with the passage of time. He knew, as he watched these two men who had enjoyed the wonder of their friendship throughout their adult lives, that such a grievous and unnecessary loss went against the natural order of things.

And he realized how close he had come to destroying the germ of the idea, killing the bringers of this wisdom. His mind replayed that first meeting at the riverbank. He could still see Kirk standing like a stone wall, facing a dozen Draconian warriors, any one of which could have defeated him. G'wai could still see the look in his eyes as if it happened only a moment ago, distraught, defiant, despairing all at once.

Almost in the same thought, he recalled Spock's face as the Vulcan left the village, alone, to rescue his friend. There was a desperation there, a warmth and a fury tied together in a way G'wai had found difficult to understand. It was clear from his words and expressions that Spock had given no thought whatsoever to his own safety.

Just as Kirk had risen from his friend's side at the river to stand before them, clearly ready to die if need be, Spock had refused to wait for help, propelled into action by the Captain's need. There was no self-preservation here. Both actions were solely concerned with protecting the other. The naturalness with which they were carried out made it seem such a simple act, but it was one

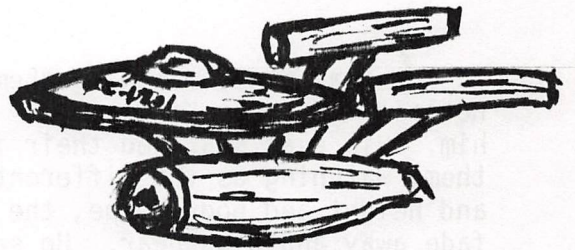
that left G'wai numb with astonishment. He did not understand then. He had only focused on the surface. Now he understood. Shaking his head in wonderment, he mumbled something and turned to walk by the river's edge. He stood there alone, staring out over the water.

Kirk watched him go, then turned to Spock. "What did he say?"

Spock looked at him. The expression in his eyes was astonishing. "He said, 'How could I have been so blind.'"



The PRIDE of the ENTERPRISE



A new vessel

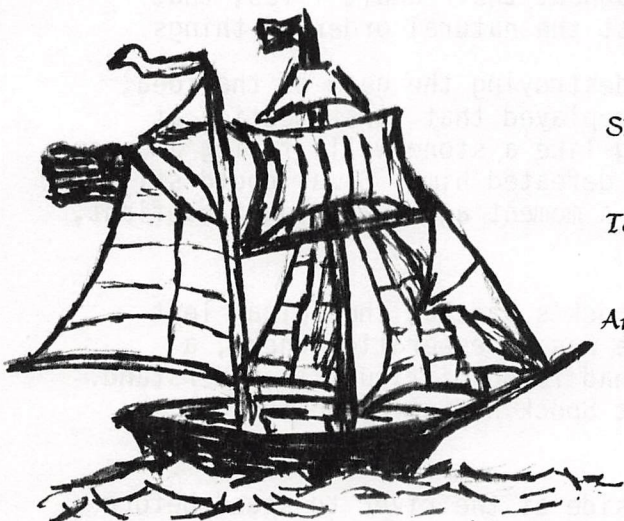
*Created in the image
of the old,*

*Named to honor the one who
Went down in the sorrow
of those who survived.*

She will live again

*To sail the starry seas,
To rebuild is*

*An enterprise of great pride
And hearts swell at her return.*



Beverly Volker

SOMEDAY WE



SHALL MEET AGAIN



story & art by Gina Godwin



"Live long... and prosper... Admiral." Spock's head bowed, and his body slid to the floor.

Kirk's face filled with the anguish of his loss, and he slumped down against the partition, his back to Spock's. Suddenly he was no longer aboard the Enterprise with his shipmates, but in a field, surrounded by men on horseback wearing armor.

Kirk looked down at the man lying on the ground, and knelt beside him. Gently, he placed his arms around the dying man's shoulders, lifting him to hear what he was saying.

"What do you think of my solution, my king?"

Kirk glanced down at the bloody wound that had been inflicted on his friend, and winced. He pulled Spock's body closer to him, absently noting the abrupt change in the Vulcan's attire. "Why, Lance? Why did you let this happen?" The name slipped out easily, as though it was the natural one to use.

"The needs... of the many... outweigh the needs of the one. You have worked all your life... to establish a society that was good and just and I... I have fought by your side. And now... because of a... woman... things are falling apart. I cannot allow this."

Kirk glanced up at the weeping woman watching them from the hillside. Then he turned back to his friend. "It did not have to be this way. We could have worked it out."

"Perhaps, but your subjects would never accept it. There are those who are using our love for Guenivere... and each other... to plot your downfall. I esteem thee too much to let that happen."

"Please, don't leave me. I need you by my side. We are two halves of the same person. I am incomplete without you."

Lancelot grimaced in pain, then smiled sadly. "Arthur, I am, and always shall be... your friend. We shall meet again, I promise you... and once again we shall tame dragons, and build kingdoms. Live long, my king, and prosper."



The knight looked toward Guenivere, who had come to stand beside Arthur. "Do not blame yourself. Arthur needs you now. Stand by him... love him. Farewell." His eyes closed and his spirit left his body.

Arthur/Kirk gently laid his friend's body on the ground and took the sobbing woman in his arms. As he held her tightly, she began to fade, transforming into a silver starship.

He looked around him, suddenly disoriented. Two men in uniform were supporting him. "Lance, don't leave me... Spock?"

Scotty and McCoy exchanged worried looks. "Jim, what did you say?"

Kirk shook his head to clear it and turned to look at the body of his friend. "Nothing, Bones. Nothing."

"He's not really dead, you know. Not as long as we remember him."



THOUGHTS



by Nancy C. Mann

AH! MR. SCOTT. COME.

Thank God, the last one.
Then I can put this petty farce
to rest.
What possessed me
to ask them to come here?
I didn't want them here.
Who do I think I'm fooling?
I couldn't be alone in this apartment.
Not yet.
He's everywhere.



SAREK!

No! No-oooo!
Not yet!
I'm not ready to see you,
I can't talk to you yet!
Come on Kirk,
think of something.
Where's your famous ingenuity now
Quickly! Stall him.
Stall.

AMBASSADOR, I HAD NO IDEA THAT
YOU WERE HERE. I BELIEVE
YOU KNOW MY CREW?



What must this look like to him?
A party?
Everyone dressed in their fine clothes,
drinking and smiling.
Human business as usual.
Not a party.
A wake.
But he wouldn't know about that.

I WILL SPEAK WITH YOU ALONE, KIRK.

Who the hell do you think you are,
ordering me around like that
and in my own home?
Just like you used to order him around.
Well, you can't order me!
You can take your orders and

No, calm down.
Take a deep breath, Kirk.
Count to ten.
Keep your temper.
Remember he's lost someone, too.

PLEASE EXCUSE US.

Oh, stay. Don't leave.
Uhura! Sulu
I don't want you to leave.
What will I say to him
when we are alone?



AMBASSADOR, I WOULD HAVE COME TO VULCAN
TO EXPRESS MY DEEPEST SYMPATHY

Sympathy ?
What a trite word to express
this...this...
devestation, this
desolation.

SPARE ME YOUR HUMAN PLATITUDES KIRK
I HAVE BEEN TO YOUR GOVERNMENT. I
HAVE SEEN THE GENESIS INFORMATION
AND YOUR OWN REPORT.

Your sanctimonious son-of-a-bitch
If you know so damn much
Then you know the only important thing.
Your son is dead!
Dear God, Spock is dead!
What else could possibly matter?

THEN YOU KNOW HOW BRAVELY YOUR SON
MET HIS DEATH.

Well said, Kirk, well said.
"Met his death."
That's a nice clean way to put it.
He walked down to the engine room
and met his death.
Met it for all of us
But it wasn't clean.
It wasn't nice.
Death met him, sought him out and
swooped up and ravaged him,
ravaged his dear body,
destroyed every cell.
Oh, how he looked!
Such pain...
His beautiful blind eyes!



WHY DID YOU LEAVE HIM ON GENESIS?
SPOCK TRUSTED YOU AND YOU DENIED
HIM HIS FUTURE.

I didn't deny him,
 He denied me!
He denied me my future.
At least I could have died with him.
He saved the ship.
He saved us all,
 all my friends, my son, my old love,
 all those inexperienced children.
He saved me!
 But he destroyed my future.



I SAW NO FUTURE.

How could there be any sort of future
 without him.
No future.
Nothing.

ONLY HIS BODY WAS IN DEATH, KIRK.
AND YOU WERE THE LAST ONE TO BE
WITH HIM.

What are you talking about?
What d'ya mean only his body was in death?
He was dead.
He is dead.
Oh, his poor dead body

YES, I WAS.

God help me, I was.
But I wasn't with him.
We were separated,
 by a wall,
 by his pain and blindness,
 by all those people in the room,
 separated in a crowd.



And I couldn't touch him,
 couldn't hold him,
 couldn't tell him

I should have known what he was going to do.
I should have know!

THEN YOU MUST HAVE KNOWN YOU SHOULD
HAVE COME WITH HIM TO VULCAN.

Vulcan! He wouldn't have wanted to there.
He never thought he was welcome.
Why would he go there?
There was nothing for him.

BUT-WHY?

Why are you doing this to me?
I can't take much more.
I don't want to talk about him anymore.
It hurts too much.
I can't



BECAUSE HE ASKED YOU TO! HE EN-
TRUSTED YOU WITH HIS VERY ESSENCE,
WITH EVERYTHING THAT WAS NOT OF THE
BODY. HE ASKED YOU TO BRING HIM TO
US AND TO BRING THAT WHICH HE GAVE
YOU-HIS KATRA, HIS LIVING SPIRIT.

He did trust me,
with everything important to him,
with his thoughts and aspirations,
with his feelings,
But not with this.
I had no part of this.
How can I make you understand?

SIR, YOUR SON MEANT MORE TO ME THAN YOU
CAN KNOW. I'D HAVE GIVEN MY LIFE IF
IF IT WOULD HAVE SAVED HIS. BELIEVE ME
WHEN I TELL YOU HE MADE NO REQUEST OF ME.



No request of me!
He asked nothing of me.
Nothing!
He didn't even talk to me before...
He just left the bridge and went
away to die.
I didn't even think of doing it!
The great Admiral Kirk, and
I didn't even think of it!
I always wait for someone else to
think of those things.
And he did.
He knew what to do and he did it.
He just walked away from me ...

No, he made no request of me, except-
Not to grieve.
Not to grieve.
That's laughable. Not to grieve.
Why didn't he just say ... don't breathe,
don't live.
That would be much more likely.



HE WOULD NOT HAVE SPOKEN OF IT
OPENLY.

Openly? No, not open for all to see,
Never open,
Except sometimes,
When I could look into his eyes and
see his very soul,
When he would allow me to.
But he didn't let me look then,
When he was dying.
He was closed to me.
Closed behind his wall,
behind the ship's wall.
Shuttered from me.



And I didn't try to break either of them down.
Coward. Coward

THEN HOW WAS I?

But I should have,
should have....

KIRK, I MUST HAVE YOUR THOUGHTS.

My thoughts? No! No!
I don't want you in my head.
I couldn't let you
My mind is raw with the ripping away of
that sweet life.

MAY I JOIN YOUR MIND?

I don't want to feel the cold of
your emotionless mind-fingers
picking and probing
and my precious memories.
These memories are all I have of him.
You could never appreciate them,
never understand what we shared.
Especially not you who never appreciated
his wonderful qualities,
warm human-vulcan qualities.
Warm, warm, he was.
And I'm so cold,
like ice-within.
I don't think I'll ever be warm again.
Nothing can bring him back so I can be
warm again.
He's gone.



But...are you saying...
is there a chance some small part of him...
if anything of him survives,
the least small part.....?
I'll risk it. I have to.
I don't want to but
I will.



CERTAINLY.

Return to Dragon Island



by Beverly Volker

The busy starbase on Argus Two was not unlike most of the standard military installations scattered throughout Federation territory, yet this one had a special familiarity about it for Captain James Kirk. He had trained on this particular facility for six months in his senior year at the Academy. Now he had returned, for the first time since those school days, to address a group of officers and cadets at a dinner honoring Admiral Hawkins, the base's retiring Commandant. When the staff had learned that the Enterprise was on patrol in the vicinity of Argus Two, her celebrated captain had been invited to speak in honor of his former instructor. Kirk welcomed the chance, although he usually avoided military affairs whenever possible. Harry Hawkins had been an influential figure in the life of a young cadet, and Kirk was eager to acknowledge that support publicly. He was also pleased to have the opportunity to return to the planet where he had first experienced a taste of what it would be like to be a Starfleet officer.

Kirk glanced around the crowded terminal to get a sense of direction, then touched his First Officer on the arm.

"I believe the reception center is that way," he pointed off to his left. "We'd better let someone know we're here, find out the schedule of activities and then we can decide what we want to do."

Spock gave him an amused, tolerant look. "As you wish, Captain."

Kirk grinned. "Are you indulging me, Spock?"

The Vulcan was unperturbed. "Indeed not. It is just that you have been prattling on about your days on this starbase ever since the invitation to speak was issued."

"I beg your pardon." Kirk was indignant. "Starship Captains do not prattle, and certainly I haven't gone on for as long as you say. I may have mentioned once or twice that I was stationed here." Spock returned a long-suffering gaze. "Never mind, forget it. Do you want to come with me or return to the ship and do whatever it is you do with your computers?"

"Captain, obviously I am here because -- "

"It was a rhetorical question, Mister Spock," Kirk interrupted. "C'mon."



At the reception center, Kirk was greeted by the formal efficiency which proved what Starfleet could accomplish when it was so motivated, and the informal warmth of a pretty young yeoman who had been assigned to see to the comforts of visiting brass. Ensign Bannister flashed an appealing smile, gave them print-outs of the activities planned for the two day celebration which would culminate in the retirement dinner, and called for a cadet to show them to the quarters which had been prepared for their stay.

"We are so proud to have you with us, Captain Kirk. Admiral Hawkins will be thrilled to have you share in this occasion."

Kirk was confused. "Will be? Harry doesn't know I'm here?"

She shook her head. "Oh, no, sir. We wanted to save you as a special surprise for him. That's why we haven't scheduled you for any of the activities today or tomorrow. You're welcome to attend any, if you like, of course, but we were hoping you'd be rather inconspicuous until the dinner tomorrow evening. We've managed to keep from the Admiral that the Enterprise is in the area, so he won't suspect that you'd be able to attend. He boasts about you all the time. Says you were his most successful student..." She lowered her eyes, suddenly embarrassed. "I... beg your pardon, sir."

Kirk laughed. "Okay. I get the picture. You want me to lay low until tomorrow evening and then sort of just appear -- surprise!"

Bannister smiled. "Yes, sir. That is what we hoped. Admiral Hawkins is very special to all of us. We couldn't think of a better way to please him than to have you as guest speaker at his dinner."

"Admiral Hawkins is special to me, too," Kirk confessed. "And I couldn't think of anyone I'd want more to pay tribute to. Very well, Yeoman, I'll make myself scarce until the dinner. It will give me a chance to show my First Officer around the base. It's his first trip to Argus Two."

Bannister nodded to Spock. "We're honored that you were able to accompany your captain, Commander. Your exploits have become legend in Starfleet... that is, the exploits of both of you... your ship..." She paused, flustered.

Spock cleared his throat. "Thank you, Yeoman. Your greeting is understood."

Kirk grinned. His astute Vulcan could be so pendentic at times. A young cadet, in full dress, saved the moment by arriving to take them to their staterooms. Bannister assured them of her availability for any needs which might arise, then turned them over to the guidance of the enthusiastic student.

Once inside their luxuriously appointed two-bedroom guest apartment, Kirk dismissed the youth and closed the door behind him. He wandered around the living room space, examining the furnishings.

"Impressive. It's nice to be appreciated, eh, Spock?"

Spock, too, evaluated the room. "Starfleet seems inclined toward giving you the red-carpet treatment."

"For a change," Kirk agreed. "It's usually grub assignments and clean-up operations that nobody else wants to do. Guess they figured we were overdue for some consideration. And it's us, Spock. They're giving us the red-carpet treatment."

"You are the surprise speaker for Admiral Hawkins."

Kirk nodded. "That may be, but Yeoman Bannister was pretty impressed by your presence. And that young cadet looked as if he might trip over his own feet every time you glanced in his direction. I'll bet he's never met a Vulcan before, and especially not one who's a legend."

Spock chose to ignore Kirk's teasing by changing the subject. "It's too bad Doctor McCoy chose not to accompany us. His accomplishments in the medical field would have no doubt earned him a measure of recognition from the staff of this base."

Kirk laughed. "What he said to me was..." he affected the doctor's drawl. " 'Jim-boy, I've no doubt that Harry Hawkins is a great man and has earned the honor and respect being paid him on his retirement, but a Starfleet dinnah is a Starfleet dinnah, and any time I can avoid an evening of speeches and hobnobbing with military brass, I'll choose to keep my distance.' " Kirk pulled out his communicator. "Which reminds me, I think I'll check in with the ship and then maybe we can do a little exploring around the base. Having all this free time is an unexpected bonus. I'll have time to show you all the places where we used to train. I especially want to take you out to Dragon Island."

Spock stood, nodding, his expression amused.

Kirk grinned. "Okay, so I'm prattling again. You're going to love it, Spock, you'll see. Why don't you order us some lunch while I make that call to the ship. Then we can get started right after we eat."



Vice-Admiral Sherad Pritchard, the soon-to-be commandant of the starbase on Argus Two, sat at his desk in his soon-to-be vacated office and scowled at the Commodore who fidgeted as he stood across from him.

"Damn it, Jeffrey, you knew the retirement ceremonies for Harry were planned for these two days. I can't believe you scheduled the new weapons and artillery testing for this time."

Jeffrey Graves was defensive. "I still don't see why it makes that much difference. We won't be testing anywhere near the ceremonies."

Pritchard thought it did. "The whole base is crawling with Federation brass, civilian visitors, representatives from other races. We just can't take the chance of something happening."

Graves sighed. "I understand your concern, but unfortunately the computers are all set, everything is ready to go. To undo all the preparation, reprogram everything, would not only be difficult and tedious, but would cost us millions of credits. You're talking about undoing fifteen months of work."

"Shit!" Pritchard slammed his fist against the desk. "How the hell did this happen? What idiot picked this date for Harry's ceremony without finding out about the tests?"

"I don't know." Graves was not about to point a finger. "But we've had this date targeted for nearly a year."

Pritchard studied the schematics on the desk screen in front of him. "You're certain this is the only area which will be affected?"

"As you can see, an area no longer used by base personnel." Graves relaxed a little. "There will be no danger to any of the visitors and the explosions are soundless. They won't even be bothered by noise."

Pritchard relented. He was still uncomfortable with the situation, but it seemed to him that he had no choice. "You make sure of that. I want everything confined to the one island, plenty of warning signs, off-limits, visual and audio broadcasts. If anything unwarranted happens, it's your ass."

Graves let his confidence return. "Don't worry. Your V.I.P.s won't even know anything's going on. Nobody's used that island for ten years. Harry's retirement ceremonies will go off without a hitch."

Pritchard snapped off the viewer and stood, drawing himself up to his full six and a half foot height. He towered over the other man. "You see to it that they do, Mister, or I'll have you busted back so far, you'll have to salute the cadets." He did not like the arrogance of the officer, but Graves was carefully staying within the bounds of his job. Nevertheless, Pritchard was getting a headache from the responsibility his new job incurred. He thought about Harry Hawkins and envied him. It would be twenty years before his own retirement. "Get out of here, Graves." The Commodore turned to leave. "And don't forget to post those warnings. Under no circumstances is anyone to go anywhere near Dragon Island."



"Why is it called Dragon Island?" Spock kept pace with Kirk as they headed toward the base marina.

"It's made up mostly of cliffs with many natural caves all over. When the Federation first colonized the planet, the early explorers found the caves filled with the skeletons, nests, and tracings of long-dead creatures

which had inhabited the island in some pre-historic time. As with the dinosaurs of Earth, scientists were unable to determine what caused them to become extinct, but in reconstructing the bones and such, it appeared the creatures resembled the mythical dragons. So, the name of the island." Kirk looked smug at knowing a piece of scientific lore that Spock didn't.

Spock decided not to respond with teasing, pursuing current information instead. "And after the starbase was established, it was used as a training area for cadets?"

Kirk nodded. "It's great. Very isolated, it's really cut off from the rest of the base. They'd take maybe thirty of us over, half would be the enemy, and half would be Starfleet. And we'd play war games. There were so many places to lay ambush." He smiled, remembering. "But, sometimes, when we were off-duty and nothing was happening over there, a couple of us would check out a boat and go over for the day, spend it exploring the caves. We'd take a lunch. Many times Gary Mitchell and I..." Kirk cut off his sentence and looked at his friend. "I want you to see it for yourself, Spock. I know you'll be as fascinated by it as I am."

Spock's gaze softened, comprehending that his captain wanted to share something which was important to him. "You make it sound intriguing, Jim. Do you suppose there will be any problem getting a boat to use?"

Kirk grinned devilishly. "I'm Captain Kirk, remember. Legend Extra-ordinaire. I'll pull rank if I have to. We'll get a boat."



James Kirk didn't need to pull rank. The ensign on duty recognized him at once and had been instructed to honor any reasonable request that the celebrated guests made. Wanting the use of a boat to visit the no longer used Dragon Island seemed a reasonable request to the young man, especially when Kirk was so friendly about it, and his Vulcan friend so courteous. The ensign could understand why an assignment aboard the Enterprise was such a coveted position.

"I can't believe Dragon Island is no longer used for training maneuvers. It was such a perfect place." Kirk was more than a little surprised.

"They haven't used it since they built the new auto-simulator center ten years ago, sir. The computers extrapolate every kind of possible situation in any kind of terrain. They say it's much more efficient and diversified than the island was." The ensign could read the disappointment in Kirk's eyes.

"Machine over the natural order of things, again. Well, maybe. But the island had to be more fun." Kirk flashed a thank you as the ensign handed him the code key to the small aquatic vessel he had requested, then turned to Spock. "Well, at least we'll have the island to ourselves. Let's see, our transportation is at dock A."

The ensign watched them leave, then turned as another young man of the same rank entered the office.

"Hey, Andy, your shift's up. What are you looking so moonstruck about?" The newcomer took his place behind the counter.

"You know who was just in here, Evan? Captain Kirk and Commander Spock from the Enterprise. They took out a boat to do some sailing on the bay."

"No kidding?" Evan Sabel was suitably impressed. "I heard they were here for Admiral Hawkins' dinner. Maybe I'll still be on duty when they get back here and I'll get to meet them."

Andy gathered up his things and logged his time in the records. "Maybe. It was a real thrill to meet them. Now you take care. I've got a two day pass, and I plan to take off for parts unknown and get in some real relaxing. Maybe a little fishing..."

Sabel grinned. "You have fun, Andy."

The ensign nodded and was gone. Sabel performed his routine coming-on-duty functions, then settled back to study some notes for an upcoming exam.

The com unit beeped at that moment, and he flipped it on. "Sabel here."

The face of his commanding officer, Lieutenant Brager, filled the screen. "I have a priority-one alert bulletin, Ensign. Please copy."

Sabel switched on the recorder. "Go ahead, sir."

"Weapon and artillery testing will commence one hour on Dragon Island and continue through eighteen hundred hours. That area is off-limits to everyone ... I repeat, everyone... until eighteen hundred hours tomorrow. Under no circumstance is anyone to be given clearance to enter the test area. It is extremely dangerous. Is that understood?"

Sabel nodded. "Understood and copied, sir."

"I want this message broadcast to all marina personnel. It is being sent simultaneously to all other areas of the base." Brager switched off his formal voice. "I don't want any private boats going out in that area. Make sure you warn anyone signing out from your station, Evan. Are you on duty the rest of the day?"

"Yes, sir. I'll make sure everyone who comes in is warned."

"Good. Log and record this message. In about one hour, Dragon Island is going to be a war target zone. Anyone in that area will be a sitting duck. We wouldn't want any of our visiting dignitaries blown to kingdom come. Wouldn't look too good on Starfleet's record."

Sabel grinned. "I'll watch out, sir." Brager cut the transmission and Sabel began broadcasting the message throughout the marina. He was a competent young officer who could be depended on to do his duty. The message sent, he turned back to his studies, grinning at his good fortune. A red alert message was his responsibility. It would look good on his record. If it had come in a few minutes earlier, Andy would have taken it. But Andy was off somewhere on a holiday and Evan had the chance to prove how valuable he was.



The sunlight sparkled off the water of the bay as the small powered craft skimmed across the surface. At the helm, Kirk guided the little two-passenger vessel toward its destination, a rocky island twenty-six miles offshore. The wind blew at his hair as he kept the throttle only half open, enjoying the experience rather than pressing for speed. At his side was the man who seemed always to belong there. Austere Vulcan features were mellowed in his relaxation, as Spock leaned back against the seat, trusting his captain's skill and experience in their current adventure. Dragon Island loomed in the near distance exactly as Kirk had described. Sharp cliffs and terrain jutted skyward, the long unoccupied caves visible even from the sea. Kirk maneuvered the small craft into the rocky cove, skillfully avoiding the treacherous outcroppings and jagged boulders that made the beaching so difficult. He cut the power, throwing Spock a look of triumph in response to his friend's admiring gaze.

"Didn't think I could do it, did you?"

The Vulcan would not be goaded. "On the contrary. I have learned never to underestimate your talents." The open admission of praise caught Kirk off guard, depriving him of a ready retort. He stared at Spock quizzically. Satisfied by the effect, Spock looked smug. Suddenly Kirk grinned, knowing he had been had.

After first making sure the boat was secured against the incoming waves, Kirk and Spock started up a small footpath that led into the cliffs toward the caves. The blue sky and balmy breeze promised a perfect afternoon for exploring, and the starfarers eagerly anticipated their trek.



Jeffrey Graves looked over the shoulder of his control officer, the computer screen flashing green schematics in front of him.

"All systems go, Lieutenant?"

The younger man did not take his eyes from the panel. "All systems report ready on your order, sir."

Graves drew in a breath. Fifteen months of hard work was finally reaching culmination. If everything went off as planned, there could very well be a promotion waiting for him. He had been diligent in his planning, and the tests on Dragon Island could revolutionize weaponry attack. Silent, no warning, safe to the user, and the topography of the cliffs would be changed by the push of a button.

"Commence testing. Round one. Fire!" The order was given, received. Only at Dragon Island would the attack be felt, and there was no one out there.



The ground seemed to shift beneath them. Halfway up the trail to a cave, the explorers felt a rumble as rocks split, dirt erupted, in a multitude of small tremors all around them. Kirk lost his footing as stones and soil slid downward. He grabbed for Spock, who reached out one arm to Kirk while the other clutched a nearby boulder to keep them both upright.

"What the hell..." Kirk regained his balance, straightening and hanging on to the wall of the cliff.

"An... earthquake?" Spock also tried to keep steady.

"I've never known of any in this area." Kirk looked around. Loose rocks were still tumbling downward.

Suddenly there was another eruption, more violent than the first. Boulders splintered, rocks flew skyward, dirt and dust rained down on them. They clung desperately to their anchors.

"Maybe we ought to head back toward the beach!" Kirk shouted over the falling debris.



In the orderly and mechanical room back at the starbase, basic topographical information was relayed back to the concerned Starfleet personnel. Confirmation was received that the weapons test was highly successful so far. But there was still more.

"Round two fired, sir."

Graves nodded. "Fire round three, Lieutenant."



Kirk and Spock struggled to keep upright as they headed down the footpath. All around them the cliffs seemed to be breaking apart into a storm of rock. For the third time there was a violent explosion. Both men were knocked over.

They tumbled, rolled and slid amidst the crumbling cliffs. On the beach, their small craft was lifted up and smashed against the rocks in the water, splintering its side and bottom, spilling its contents into the churning waves. The falling men fought for a handhold, fought to remain conscious as they plummeted toward the sea.

Spock went headfirst into the shallow water, his skull making contact with the rocks, his face submerged. Kirk came down with huge boulders, hitting the

water feet first and skidding in with the rocks on top of him. When they came, finally, to a halt, Spock swallowed, filling his lungs with water before he managed to bring his head out into the air. Half-lying, half-leaning against the sharp rock, he fought to take in oxygen, the action causing him to expell the excess fluid in his lungs. Retching violently, he coughed out the sea water until he was finally able to take a breath. Dazed, cut and bleeding, he gasped, his chest heaving. He tried to focus, frantically looking around to see where Kirk had landed.

The captain was several meters away, half-submerged in the water, his upper torso resting against a boulder. His head was thrown back and his eyes were closed. He did not move. Ignoring his own pain, Spock made himself crawl and climb over the sharp rocks toward Kirk, unable to make his voice call the name aloud. As he reached him, for one terrifying moment, Spock feared the worst, then he saw the chest move under the torn gold tunic.

"Jim!" Spock's voice scratched out at last. He touched Kirk's face and the captain groaned as he struggled to consciousness. "Jim! Wake up!"

In response, Kirk opened his eyes and focused with effort. "My... god!" He tried to raise himself. Spock put an arm around his shoulders to assist. "That was a... rough way to make a... descent!"

Assured that Kirk was lucid and able to move, Spock pulled away, leaning back in the water. He checked his own body. "I do not seem to be seriously injured. Are you all right?"

Kirk grimaced. "Yes, I think so." He moved gingerly. "I don't think anything's broken..."

Spock's footing was still unsteady in the slippery floor beneath the waist-high water. "Perhaps we should move up on the beach." His eyes raked the now litter-strewn sandy cove a few meters away. He started to pull himself up out of the water, noticing that Kirk was having some difficulty accomplishing the same feat.

"I seem to be caught, Spock." Kirk was trying to find something to grip. "My... leg. I can't get it loose."

Spock inched closer, moving behind and wrapping his arms around Kirk's chest. He added his strength to aid the attempt to pull free.

"Hhhuh!" Kirk's unbidden cry halted their movement. "Won't...budge. There's...there's something cutting into my... knee when we try to...move." He took a deep gulp of air, steadying himself against the pain.

Spock moved around to the front of Kirk, trying to see through the water to the source of the problem. "Your other leg -- is it free?"

Kirk tested, nodding. "Yes...yes. I can move it. But the right foot... leg... up to my knee... seems to be wedged. Mmnph..." He tried again and triggered the torment. "Shit... something sharp... must be a rock."

Up to his hips in the water, Spock crouched down to feel beneath the surface, examining with his hands what he could not see. The water moved as

waves rolled in toward the shore, splashing against the cliff bottom, a constant motion unaffected by the eruptions which had just taken place on the island.

"Yes... your leg does seem to be wedged." He brought up his hands. Traces of red mixed with the water and ran down his fingers. "You are also bleeding."

Kirk leaned forward, letting his own hands trace the same area which Spock had just examined.

"Some...some of the cliff must have landed with me. Mmph... The weight of the water seems to be holding it secure. " He grimaced as his movement caused the sharp rock to pierce his leg again. "Spock, you're going to have to find something to help you dig it out." The water breaking against the boulders splashed up in his face.

Spock frowned. "Don't try to move any more. You may be causing additional injury." He glanced around, reluctant to leave Kirk's side.

The Captain brushed the water from his eyes. "Spock... go on. See what you can find on the beach."

For the next hour, Spock made repeated trips to the beach and back to the water, trying a number of scavenged items to use as a lever to loosen the debris which held Kirk. Nothing worked. The leg was secured by the weight of the water wedging the rocks into an effective and immovable trap. The Vulcan was frustrated by his efforts and concerned by the increasing red coloration of the water. He was beginning to fear that something might have severed an artery in Kirk's leg, and only the pressure of the rock which pinned him was preventing him from bleeding to death.

The human tried to assist in freeing his limb, but the constant bombardment of water splashing in his face and eyes made the task difficult. He realized his lower body was growing numb from immersion in the cold water.

Spock had searched the beach for their communicators or phasers, but to no avail. The instruments had been lost in their fall down the cliffs. Again, he waded back toward Kirk, his hands empty. There seemed to be nothing else in the immediate vicinity to use as a tool to free Kirk. As he reached his captain, water splashing up around his waist, he noticed that Kirk seemed to be struggling more to keep his balance as the persistent waves pummelled at him. Two pairs of eyes met, each gaze revealing the same sense of inadequacy against the situation. Spock moved close to the trapped man and Kirk grimaced.

"No luck, huh?"

Spock shook his head. "I seem to have exhausted all the possible tools."

Kirk started to slip, felt Spock's arms go around him for support. "Okay. Now what?"

There was a hesitancy in the forthcoming answer. "The tide is coming in."



Montgomery Scott cut the transmission from Starfleet headquarters and leaned back, cursing softly under his breath. "Damned Klingon bastards! They won't be satisfied until they've started a full scale war."

Behind him, Dr. McCoy scowled. "I'll get down to sickbay and start getting supplies ready. Lord knows what kind of carnage we'll find on that outpost they attacked. Are you going to contact Jim?"

Scotty nodded, turning to face McCoy. The two men were in Kirk's quarters, having been instructed to receive the transmission on the captain's private channel. Now they both understood the top priority urgency. The Klingons had attacked a Federation outpost and the Enterprise was the closest ship to assist. "Aye, 'tis a pity to interrupt his ceremonies, but headquarters was verra specific in their orders. If there's any more o' those sons-of-bitches lurking around the outpost, our Captain needs to be on board. He'd want to be, anyway."

McCoy started out the door as Scott called the bridge. "Uhura, get me a channel to the starbase and have them patch me through to Captain Kirk. Tell them it's urgent."

McCoy interrupted. "Tell Jim to let me know if he has any special instructions for me, Scotty."

The engineer drummed his fingers, waiting for the call to be put through. "That I will, Doctor, but I'm sure he'll say be prepared to treat a great number of casualties."

McCoy nodded. "My staff will be ready."



Dragon Island still shook with the repeated blastings, but the tremors were farther away on the opposite side of the cliffs.

Spock reached over to touch Kirk's shoulder, drawing his attention. "Jim, I'm ready to try now." He had to shout above the noise of the waves, breaking closer to them, splashing up white water that drenched Kirk each time. Although Spock could still stand upright in the above waist-high depth, Kirk's precarious position made it necessary for him to keep his upper torso stretched to keep his shoulders above the sea; while the force of the waves kept knocking him backward.

Spock had spent the last half hour creating an elaborate kind of rigging to give him the most leverage in moving the pressure-held rocks. Collecting any piece of usable material from the beach and nearby cliffs, Spock had ignored the green slashes on his hands, as he had worked both under and above water to see a way to free Kirk.

"I've managed to place that piece of iron I found down between the rocks. If I move back to there -- " he indicated a boulder near the shore, "-- I should be able to apply enough pressure to dislodge some of the rocks."

Kirk nodded. "Just do it, Spock. If you think it'll work, I...don't need an explanation." Water broke over his head once more. His hands came up to wipe it from his eyes.

"Jim -- " Spock waited until Kirk could hear him again. "If you feel the slightest movement at all, you must try to pull your leg free quickly. Can you do that?"

Kirk took a breath. "I'll give it my damndest. Right now I'm not sure I'll feel anything happening to that leg."

"I will tell you when to try." Spock moved away from Kirk, toward the boulder he had indicated. When he was in position, he called to Kirk that he was ready. Spock applied his Vulcan strength to the lever he had rigged. Very slowly it began to move downward just a fraction of an inch. The veins stood out on his temples and muscles corded along his arms as he pressed with every bit of strength he possessed. From the water he could hear Kirk calling.

"Now, Spock? Try now?"

Suddenly, the lever gave way, and Spock found himself sprawled on his chest across the huge rock, his face scraped against it. He picked himself up, fury and frustration visibly emanating from his whole being as he turned in the direction of his friend. He watched as Kirk's head and shoulders emerged from still another dunking, agony consuming him. as he moved toward the exhausted man.

"The material was not strong enough. It broke under the pressure." Spock was devastated, indignant against the laws of nature which had bested him, ashamed at having failed Kirk ultimately.

"Spock, we're not going to be able to get me out by ourselves. We need help." Kirk's stating of the obvious offered no solution.

"Is there anything on this island which we could use to contact the star-base or any nearby vessels?" Spock was grasping and he knew it.

"Nothing that I know about -- at least there wasn't when I was stationed here. And since they are obviously using it for target practice, my guess is that it's still probably deserted."

"I do not wish to leave you here alone, but perhaps I should make my way around the island just to be certain that we aren't overlooking something."

Kirk shook his head. "That's not a good idea, Spock. I'd be willing to bet my life... uh, that is, my military experience convinces me that Star-fleet's not going to be destroying anything useful. Besides, it's too dangerous. They're still blasting and we don't know where the targets are."

"I could be careful not to -- "

"No. Give me a minute. Let me think. We're twenty-six miles from base with no boat. You couldn't swim that far even if you weren't from Vulcan. And if they're testing out here, they've probably warned all vessels to stay out of the vicinity. What I can't figure is why we didn't hear about it."

"An example of bureaucratic malfunctioning."

Kirk glanced foldly at the Vulcan. His matter-of-fact criticism was an indication of his fear.

"Wait. That's it, Spock. That young ensign who gave us the boat. He knew we were coming out here. As soon as he gets the word that the island is off-limits because of testing, he'll tell them about us. All we have to do is wait until they discover the error and they'll be out looking." Kirk wasn't so certain that the solution would be that simple. He, too, was familiar with military foul-ups. Water broke over his head, pushing him off-balance. Spock reached out to steady him.

"How long before the tide comes all the way in, Spock?"

Spock glanced up at the sky, calculating. "Approximately another six hours."

"That should be enough time to miss us, don't you think?" Kirk hoped his voice sounded positive.

"Miss us and find us." Spock went along with the charade.

"Damn, this water's cold. Why don't you go up on the beach for awhile. No use both of us being miserable."

For an answer, Spock moved around behind Kirk, positioning himself so the captain would lean against him instead of the boulder. A wave washed up over them both.

"Spock, I told you to go up on the beach."

"Is that an order, sir?"

The water pressed Kirk back into the cushion of Spock's body. "No. I guess not." He gratefully accepted the little comfort Spock was able to offer.



McCoy entered the bridge before the lift doors were all the way open. He crossed to the communications console, where Scott was leaning over Uhura in conversation.

"Scotty, Uhura, what do you mean the base can't locate Jim and Spock? They beamed down there to attend the activities, didn't they? They must be involved!" McCoy interrupted the two officers.

Scott straightened, peering at the vocal physician. "Control ye'reself, Doctor, 'till you've heard an explanation." He paused a moment, letting McCoy fidget, then continued. "The Captain and Mr. Spock are registered and checked into the hotel, but it seems they had some free time so they took off somewhere and apparently didn't think it necessary to inform anyone of their every movement. Central Comm is trying to raise them now on their communicators, providing they took them along."

"Jim wouldn't go anywhere without his communicator. He always wants to be available in case he's needed on the ship." McCoy ignored the pained look from Scott. "Well, my sickbay's all ready." He bounced impatiently, to the annoyance of Scott and Uhura, until the console beeped a message coming in from the base. McCoy was about to instruct the woman to respond, but she was already pressing the button to that effect.

"Base Central, Enterprise. We apologize for the delay." The filtered voice was female.

"Accepted, Central. Have you located Captain Kirk?" Uhura got right to the point.

"Negative, Lieutenant. If he took his communicator with him, he has it deactivated. We are picking up no response on any frequency signal."

Uhura frowned. "How about Mister Spock?"

"Same for him, Lieutenant. We've been trying to reach either of them." The base comm officer was not going to be charged with not doing her job. Uhura put her on hold while she turned to Scott for further orders.

"Ask who on the base would know their whereabouts. Tell her it's a priority aboard the Captain's ship."

Uhura relayed Scott's message. The voice came over again. "I can put you through to Vice-Admiral Pritchard. He's in charge of base operations as well as the ceremonies for Admiral Hawkins."

Scott nodded. McCoy fidgeted while the series of delays and relays occurred to put Engineer Scott in contact with the base commander. The doctor was getting a tension headache. First the news of the attack and now the difficulty of locating Kirk was creating a niggling worry that spelled more trouble than McCoy liked to deal with in a day's work.



The sun had sunk low behind the cliff and was no longer visible at all. Dusk had brought a fierce chill into the air as well as a ceasing of the military bombardment of the island. Only the sound of nightbirds circling overhead broke the constant din of crashing waves. Still trapped in his watery prison, Kirk had lost all sensation of feeling below his waist and was now fighting an exhausting battle to keep his head above water. He concentrated on gulping air between the assaulting waves. Twice he had sent Spock back to the beach, correctly insisting that he would need the Vulcan's strength if help were delayed in coming. Spock had built a fire from dry

wood collected higher up the cliff, and after a few minutes in front of it each time to warm his blood, had plunged back into the frigid water to be at Kirk's side with support both physical and emotional.

Now, however, as evening drew close, both men became increasingly aware of the rising depth of the water. Before the full tide was in, it would be well over Kirk's head. Weakly, Kirk clung to Spock's shoulders as the Vulcan lifted him forward, keeping his head above the water, moving with the rhythm of the waves, whispering the one instruction: "Now... breathe..." He let Kirk slip, relaxing as the wave receded. Kirk took in air for a few seconds, then felt Spock's arms go around him once more, drawing him upward as the foam crashed over them.

"We cannot keep you above water much longer." Spock let Kirk slide down once more. "I am doubtful that help will arrive before that time." The Vulcan forced himself to speak truthfully, painful though that truth was.

"I... don't know why they... they haven't... by now." Disappointment was evident in Kirk's voice and Spock cringed inwardly against it.

"Jim, I think we need to construct some kind of device to allow you to breathe underwater."

The next wave caught them off guard, slamming Kirk back against the boulder and causing Spock to lose his footing. Recovering quickly, he grabbed Kirk, pulling him up off the rocks. They were both coughing, expelling swallowed sea water.

"A tube..." Kirk was gasping, keeping the thought of a way to breathe. "I'll need...some...some kind of tube...get air underwater...till...till help..."

Spock clutched at his captain, fear threatening to replace rational thought. "I'm not certain any kind of device will work under these conditions. The water is too rough... you may be under water too long..."

"Spock...it's my only chance... I can't get loose and... and the water is rising. I have to have a way to...breathe." An edge of panic was creeping in, the fear in Spock transmitting itself to Kirk.

Spock nodded. "Can you keep yourself up long enough for me to construct something?" In answer, the captain forced his tortured body to straighten, stretching so that his head and shoulders were above water level. He held himself stiffly, steeling against the next wave.

The Vulcan made his way to the beach, Kirk watching silently. If this didn't work, he would drown, or... he pushed the other thought from his mind. There was one other way to live, one other way to get free. He knew his friend had thought of it as well, although neither had vocalized the option. It was not an option at all, really, Kirk thought. It was a last choice action, an action which would give him a chance for survival, but take away his life. The captain peered out toward the darkening horizon, but there was no rescue ship in sight.



Sherad Pritchard had a monumental headache, but he didn't find much sympathy in the cold blue eyes of the Enterprise's Chief Medical Officer. Leonard McCoy stood across the desk from him, refusing a seat, conveying a manner which just skirted the edge of insubordination. Pritchard couldn't blame him. The doctor had a valid complaint. An invited starship captain -- one that just happened to be a bit of a hero in the fleet -- and the celebrated Vulcan First Officer were missing on a military base, and no one seemed able to locate them or give any indication of their whereabouts for nearly ten hours. The Enterprise and her captain were needed on an important mission. Lives depended on them. Yet the base's security had been unsuccessful in their search for two individuals. To make matters worse, the base was crawling with top brass, invited for the same purpose as Kirk, and Pritchard was still simmering over Graves' foul up with the scheduled testing on Dragon Island.

McCoy leaned over, placing his hands on Pritchard's desk. "Damn it, your security teams have had enough time to locate a microbe on this base, and they can't find two specific life forms."

"Do you know how many humans are on this planet, Doctor? Or for that, how many Vulcans? There's no way to isolate them without further information, a more specific destination, perhaps. Even your ship is powerless." Pritchard glared at McCoy.

"Then get Admiral Hawkins down here. Maybe he's heard from the captain." McCoy was firm.

"I remind you, Lt. Commander, I give the orders on this base, and your attitude is -- "

"My attitude is going to get a lot worse if something has happened to Kirk or Commander Spock. They would not stay away for hours without checking in with the ship or someone, unless there was a reason. You've looked everywhere else, maybe Hawkins knows something."

"Captain Kirk is to be a surprise at the Admiral's dinner tomorrow. He is aware of that and would not have contacted Harry and spoiled the surprise."

"Damn your surprise! You don't know what might have -- " The intercom buzzed, interrupting McCoy's tirade.

"Security Chief Mattix here, sir." The metallic voice announced the caller. "I'm at the marina. The ensign on duty here says the officer in charge before he arrived said Captain Kirk and Commander Spock were in this afternoon. He thinks they took out a boat, but doesn't remember being told where they were headed."

Pritchard's eyes gleamed. "Didn't you do a sensor sweep of the bay earlier, Chief?"

"Yes, sir, we did. No unaccounted for life forms indicated."

McCoy moved around the desk. "Let me talk to the Ensign on duty."

Pritchard nodded and Evan Sabel appeared on the screen. "I didn't see them personally, sir, but Andy... that is, Ensign Crocker told me they had taken out a boat just before I arrived. They haven't returned it since I've been on duty."

"Did Crocker say that they mentioned where they were going?" McCoy asked.

"No, sir."

"Where is Crocker now?"

"He's...uh, off for the weekend." Sabel hesitated. "With his...girl. He didn't say where he was going. I...I don't think he wanted to be found, sir."

"Damn!" McCoy moved away as Pritchard took over the intercom.

"See if you can find Mr. Crocker, Mattix." He cut the transmission, meeting McCoy's gaze.

"Kirk was stationed on this base as a young officer. Maybe he wanted to show Spock some of his early haunts. Now, will you get in touch with Admiral Hawkins. He might know where the captain used to go."

Pritchard knew the doctor was right. He had begun to get a queasy feeling at the pit of his stomach. He depressed a call button on the intercom. "Central, get me Admiral Hawkins. Top priority."

McCoy stood back. "Then call Commander Scott and have Enterprise do a sensor scan of the bay area."



The hollow tube which Spock had cut gave Kirk a little more breathing time, but the constant rush of waves was taking its toll on his stamina. He was growing sleepy despite the noise and activity of the sea. He wanted to close his eyes as the water washed over him, letting it lull him into oblivion. Somewhere in the back of his mind, though, he knew he could not do this. Spock was moving around him, he knew, and he wondered what the man was doing. He wanted his friend to put his arms around him, help buffer the waves, take his weight and keep him from being slammed against the rocks. But Spock was occupied with something and had been ducking underwater since he had returned with the tube.

"Spock..." Kirk caught a glimpse of the dark head as it emerged from the depths. "What...what are you doing?"

Spock moved closer to him. Rivulets ran down his face, dripping from the evenly cut bangs. He brushed the wetness from his eyes. "Jim, you can't stay here. It will be eight hours before the water begins to recede. You will not be able to survive that long. The tube is not sufficient to give you enough air to breathe."

Kirk grabbed for Spock, wanting something to hold on to, something to take the pressure off himself. He let Spock take his weight, hold him close, pull him up off the rock.

"Your leg seems to be wedged up to the knee. I can apply a tourniquet around the thigh area. There is a shard of rock up on the beach which is quite sharp. Part of it is rather jagged and should effectively substitute as a saw..."

Kirk dug his hands into the Vulcan's shoulders. "Spock... for gods sake..." Terror threatened to scream from his throat.

Spock took a breath, his voice low and ragged, hating what he knew he had to say, had to do. "You will... drown, Jim."

"No!" Water crashed over them, its force battering, pummeling against the fragile things caught at its mercy. The undertow tugged at Spock's legs and he automatically steeled himself against being pulled off balance.

"We have already waited nearly too long. Once your head is underwater, I will not be able to operate fast enough to keep you alive."

"You... can't cut off my leg!" Kirk voiced it and the reality sounded unbelievable.

"I... I don't know any other way.. to save your life."

"Please... please, Spock. Something else... There must be another...way." Even as he said it, Kirk knew there wasn't. The possibility had been with them all along although they had not faced it. He knew Spock would have already exhausted all other alternatives. "I'd be...be...crip...I'd...have to...wear a...no...no..." Weariness threatened to defeat him. He was weak and vulnerable and terribly frightened.

"You'd be alive." Spock was shivering, holding Kirk so close, so cold. He wanted Kirk alive, wanted him to stay that way, but he wasn't certain that was going to happen. Time was running out for them. A decision had to be made, and Spock knew he couldn't even guarantee the outcome. If he didn't amputate, Kirk would surely drown. Yet he could very well kill Kirk himself in a clumsy attempt at butchery. He felt the human body stiffen in his arms.

"You...you better get...up to the...beach." Spock didn't answer. "Spock... you said the...saw... is on the beach..."

"Jim..."

"You...have to do it. I know..."

Spock let go of Kirk and their eyes met, filled with mutual pain and trust. If they were filled with anything else, the wetness of the seaspray hid it. Spock slowly drew away, as Kirk braced to withstand the onslaught of the waves alone.

"Do you...still have the...fire going on...on the beach?" Spock nodded. "Well, maybe...maybe someone will see it...before....before..."

"Yes, perhaps." The Vulcan's reply was barely audible. He turned toward the shore.



"Dragon Island." Admiral Hawkins was not even hesitant with his answer. "Young Jim Kirk and a bunch of his friends used to love to go out to Dragon Island on their off-duty days. Those boys would explore that place til they knew it like the back of their own hands. Yessir, if Kirk is showing his First Officer the base where he took his training, I'd bet my career they went out to Dragon Island."

Pritchard blanched, but Hawkins went on, addressing McCoy. "Doctor, if you're looking for your captain, that's where you'll find him." He chuckled to himself. "Imagine Jim comin' here to speak at my retirement. I'm looking forward to seeing that boy."

McCoy smiled, pushing worry to the back of his mind in the face of the Admiral's easy manner. He was indeed a man who would inspire a young ensign. The doctor glanced at Pritchard and his smile faded. "What is it? What's wrong?"

Pritchard turned to Hawkins. "Dragon Island was being used for testing the new weaponry today. It was ordered off limits to all personnel."

Hawkins glared. "You were testing weapons when you have a base full of visitors?"

"The tests were scheduled for months. All precautions were taken." Pritchard found himself repeating Graves' argument.

"Is it possible an error could have been made? That Captain Kirk and Commander Spock weren't advised of the off-limit status?" Hawkins was relentless. The beep of McCoy's communicator prevented Pritchard's reply.

"Doctor..." The ship's Chief Engineer spoke urgently. "Our sensors pick up two life forms -- one human and one Vulcan -- on an island off the coast of the bay."

Pritchard closed his eyes, answering Hawkins' query. "It's possible, Admiral. It's possible."



Wet, shivering, momentarily disoriented, they materialized on the Enterprise's main transporter pad. The Vulcan was holding a sharp saw-like slice of rock. Around Kirk's thigh, a blue shirt had been tied into a tourniquet. He was not able to stand. The waiting medical team moved toward them. Spock watched the four technicians. "Where's McCoy?"

Scott was at the controls. "Preparing to beam him up from the base now, Mr. Spock."



The first thing Kirk was aware of was warmth. Then softness, dryness, quiet sounds. He opened his eyes, basking in those luxuries. Across the room, McCoy was standing with Spock. Kirk noticed that the Vulcan was wearing the coveralls of a sickbay resident, but he appeared fit. Kirk wondered at his own condition. He felt groggy but in no pain. In fact, there was no sensation at all below his waist.

"He's awake." Kirk's attention was drawn to McCoy's voice. His two officers moved toward him. "Good morning, Jim. Glad to see you back with us. I was just telling Spock that you should be coming to soon. How do you feel?"

"A little woozy." Kirk's eyes raked over Spock, asking a question. McCoy answered it.

"He's going to be fine. Suffering a little from exposure and his hands were pretty badly cut, but we've taken care of that. And you both swallowed entirely too much sea water." Kirk nodded; he went on. "And you, Captain. Your leg was badly crushed. you lost a lot of blood... but thanks to your skillful old doctor, you should be up and around and out of here by the time we get our next assignment." He saw Kirk glance down at his covers. "You can't feel anything because of the anesthesia I gave you while I was doing the repair work. It will wear off soon."

Kirk grinned. "How did you know where to find us?"

Scott entered sickbay just in time to answer the question. "Sensors picked up your life readings and we could tell that you were both in the water, not moving very much. From the depth of the water, it looked like you didn't have very much time left before it was over your heads, so I figured I'd better get you out of there first and ask questions later."

"You don't know how little time we did have." Kirk sighed. "Thank you, Mr. Scott."

"And you can thank Harry Hawkins for telling us where to find you," McCoy explained. "He certainly knew his students. He's waiting outside to hear how you are."

"I told you he was quite a man," Kirk agreed. "Why don't you tell him to come in after a few minutes, Bones. I went there for his retirement and still haven't had a chance to see him." McCoy nodded and headed for the door. "Mr. Scott, Dr. McCoy mentioned our next assignment..."

Scott nodded. "Enterprise was supposed to handle a rescue mission at Outpost Fourteen, but when we couldn't find you, headquarters contacted the Hood. She was just as close as we were, anyway. They'll have another assignment for us as soon as they hear from you." Kirk yawned in spite of himself; Scotty smiled gently. "You get some rest now, Captain. I'll be on the bridge, keeping an eye on things until you get there."

Kirk felt his eyes drifting closed, then suddenly forced them open. Spock hadn't said a word since he had been standing by the bedside. "Sit down, Spock. You must not be feeling completely strong yet."

Spock pulled over a chair, obeying his Captain's suggestion without objection. His gaze rested briefly on Kirk's legs, then he quickly looked away.

"Yes, they're both still there, Spock," Kirk said softly. "We were lucky...again."

Spock drew a breath. "Luck. That does seem to have been the salvation in this incident."

Kirk reached out to touch his friend's hand. "If it had turned out the other way, we would have dealt with it. It would have been hard, but without rescue... it was our only option."

Spock shivered. "Intellectually, I know that..."

"But emotionally, it was so hard to do," Kirk finished for him. Spock didn't respond. "Spock, I live my life by logic and intellect, too. Most of us in our profession do. But if we didn't care about the consequences of our actions, this starship might as well be run by computers, and you know how unacceptable that is."

"When I first knew that I was going to be unable to free you from the rocks, it occurred to me that amputation would most likely be our only solution. Logically, that would have been the time to do it, while there was still time and I could have done a more efficient job. Then, later, as the tide grew higher, I was afraid I had waited too long, jeopardized your chance for survival because I...I didn't want to... to cut off your leg. To do that to you. I wanted you whole. It was selfish. I risked your life."

"You held on to hope, Spock." Kirk's tone was affectionate. "You were there with me, giving your support. You gave me a reason to hang on, to hope, too. Don't you think I thought of it early, too? But I didn't want to give up. You made that possible. We took a chance, Spock, and we gave each other the strength to carry it off. It may not be logical, but it's what made us win that chance."

Spock pursed his lips, admitting the truth of his captain's explanation. "It appears you may be right, Captain. Hope and luck do seem to work for many humans."

"Humans and half humans, Mister Spock." Kirk leaned back against the pillow. "And if I'm ever in another situation like that, I'd rather have a certain half Vulcan with me than anyone else."

"I do...hope it will not be for quite a long time," Spock added.

"Well, maybe it won't be... if we're lucky."



ENTERPRISE



Enterprise
Beautiful lady
Silver, star-born, dream-laden maid
Demand mistress
of a bold-eyed Captain
who offered you all that he was
who yearned for you and
was never complete without you

Enterprise
Bold ship to go where none had gone
Battle scarred, wounded unto death,
you battled ever on
Brought low, but never beaten
You cradled those whose fragile lives
breathed on within your womb

Enterprise
Twenty years
Adventures to far off stars
and being the pride of the fleet
Re-fits and rebuilds and repairs
and still the heart of you remained.

Enterprise
Three men stood
who loved you well
and with last desperate hope
and voices hoarse with grief
gave you your last command
Die, my darling
give your all, one last time,
that your children may live

Enterprise
A heart rending shattering
and a final fiery blaze
Your death throes valiantly majestic
Your eulogy:
"Oh my God, what have I done?"

Enterprise
Proud lady
They have given your name to another
as you were named for others long past
Even your number
in bold black design
graces her silver crown
But even as my joy reaches
some small dark doubt remains
They gave her your name,
your Captain, your crew,
but could they give her your soul?

D.A. Martin

The Voyage (the hell) Home



by Steve Wilson & Scott Grossman
cartoons by Jan Davies & Steve Wilson

(Stage and house DARK. Screen over back of stage for slides)

SLIDE 1: CLIPPERCON ASSOCIATES PRESENT

(Cue: Main title from STAR TREK IV)

SLIDE 2: A MOOSEFILMS LTD. PRODUCTION

SLIDE 3: A STEVEN WILSON PLAY

SLIDE 4: STAR TREK IV -- THE VOYAGE THE HELL HOME

SLIDE 5: STARRING

LANCE WOODS
RUSSELL VOLKER JR.
STEVEN WILSON

SLIDE 6: USING

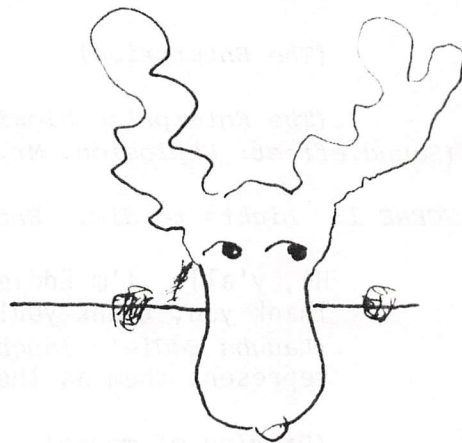
DAVE KEEFER
JONATHAN KIPPAX
DANNY DAVIES
FLORENCE BUTLER

SLIDE 7: EXPLOITING

SUZANNE ELMORE
TOM SOMMERVILLE
NANCY KIPPAX
IAN BONDS
MIKE ELMORE

AND ESPECIALLY

SCOTT GROSSMAN



And the Not-Ready-
For-Paramount-Flags

SLIDE 8: AND INTRODUCING (UNDER PROTEST)
RENEE VOLKER AS SAAVIK

SLIDE 9: SPECIAL GUEST APPEARANCE BY
DAVID KIPPAX AS THE PUNK

SLIDE 10: PLAY BY STEVE WILSON AND SCOTT GROSSMAN

SLIDE 11: & STEVE WILSON AND SCOTT GROSSMAN

SLIDE 12: CAMERA, LIGHTING, SPECIAL EFFECTS, GROANS OF DISMAY:
 GEORGE LAWRENCE
ASSISTANT TO MR. WILSON: RENEE VOLKER
STUNTS: HANS, THE AMAZING MOOSE
AND: SCOTT GROSSMAN

SLIDE 13: BUDGET REFUSED BY: MARION
MISTAKES: THE BBC
BAD VOICE OVERS: POOR MISGUIDED CONGOERS ROPED INTO IT
WHALES SUPPLIED BY: MARTHA
MOOSE TRAINED BY: SCOTT GROSSMAN

SLIDE 14: WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE MOOSE JOKES. THE DIRECTOR WISHES
IT KNOWN THAT THOSE RESPONSIBLE HAVE BEEN SACKED, SHOT,
STABBED, AND POISONED.

SLIDE 15: THE ACTORS WISH IT KNOWN THAT THEY WISH TO SACK THE
DIRECTOR AND BRING BACK THE MOOSE.
(Cue: End Music)

SLIDE 16: THE STORY OF THE FILM SO FAR
(AND SCOTT GROSSMAN)

SLIDE 17: (The Enterprise)

SLIDE 18: (The Enterprise blowing up)
(Sound effect: Explosion, Mr. Bill, "Ohhh, nooo!")

SCENE 1: Lights to dim. Enter EDDIE MURPHY)

EDDIE: Hi, y'all. I'm Eddie. (Holds up sign: "APPLAUSE")
Thank you, thank you! You're beautiful, man, I'm serious.
(Laughs Eddie's laugh) Now, the Klingons done asked me to
represent them as their ambassador.

SLIDE 19: (Drawing of moose)

What the hell is that? Listen, I don't appreciate these
moose jokes, y'all. That's very immature. Now you're
acting like (Sound of bleep), so cut it out, and every-
body be happy.

SLIDE 20: (MEGO Kirk Doll)

Thank you. Now, this mother -- gentleman has been causing
a lot of trouble, blowin' up us Klingons an' all. He's
been very impolite. Now we jus' looking for justice, is all.

(Enter SAREK)

SAREK: So's your old man!

(Lights to FULL)

EDDIE: Sarek! (Laugh) Hey! It's Spock's daddy! Can I have your autograph?

SAREK: Blow it out your ear!

EDDIE: Hey, man, I wouldn't mention ears if I was you. Why you actin' this way? You been doin' some bad mind melds or something like that? Look, I'm just here to say we got some rights --

SAREK: Rights? What right have you to come here and upstage our actors -- make expensive cameo appearances in OUR movie? We don't need you, Mr. Murphy, OR your box-office sales!

EDDIE: (Laugh)

SAREK: (Pulls a gun, turns to audience) I want it known that I'm saying this under protest. (to EDDIE) Get off my planet!

EDDIE: (Hands up) Now, you know, Sarek, you're being very rude. (Backing off stage) Yeah! Okay! Man, you gonna be sorry! I'm gonna write my congressman! I'm personal friends with Harve Bennett, man! That does it, I ain't bein' nice no more! I'll be back! Just wait 'til STAR TREK V! (exit EDDIE)

SAREK: Fascinating. (exit SAREK)

(Clear stage. Sign on wall reads KIRK IS A JERK in red letters. BRIDGE CREW enters as KIRK speaks.)

KIRK: (Voice over) Captain's Log -- oh! What a giveaway! ADMIRAL'S log: STAR TREK III plus three months. Our exile on Vulcan is almost over. The crew will vote tonight on our return to earth - not that I'm really offering them a choice. We all know that it's the right thing to do, to face our accusers, to take the consequences of our actions, heroically place ourselves in custody... and have a meal consisting of something other than green soup. Only one thing concerns me tonight (Enters, points to sign) WHO DID IT?



"Get off of my planet"
Sarek (Tom Summerville)
to Eddie Murphy

ALL: Not me!

KIRK: I see. *(Starts to pace. MCCOY drops a spray can. KIRK crosses, picks it up, holds it out at him.)* It's people like you what causes unrest. *(Gives can to UHURA, who looks confused.)* Now, it's time to vote. Scotty?

SCOTTY: McDonald's!

SULU: Me for Hardee's!

CHEKOV & UHURA: Burger King!

KIRK: All right, I get the idea. I feel like pizza myself. But, I MEANT who's in favor of going back to earth?

ALL: ME!!

SCOTTY: And soon, Captain. The Vulcans dinna have bathrooms.

KIRK: Well, neither did the ENTERPRISE. -Ahem- Stations, please. *(Exit UHURA and CHEKOV)* Scotty, about the ship --

SCOTTY: I only bought the paint, sir. It was McCoy's idea!

MCCOY: Traitor!

KIRK: No, Scotty. How soon can we leave?

SCOTTY: Four days, sir.

KIRK: Four...DAYS?

SULU: Everything Mr. Scott says is multiplied by four. So, when he says four, he really means three.

KIRK: And you multiply everything by five?

SULU: Three, sir.

KIRK: Three... *(Thinks)*.. When the hell are we leaving?!

MCCOY: Tomorrow, Jim.

KIRK: Is there anything good on cable tonight?

MCCOY: I still think we should have chartered a bus, Jim. I mean, to have to fly home in that ---

KIRK: Bones, we could fly home in the Excelsior.

MCCOY: Okay. Nobody wants to ride in a starship that might go into labor. I just wish we could cloak the stench.

KIRK: Of the dead Klingon that we left in there and forgot about at the end of the last movie?

MCCOY: No, of our uniforms. We haven't changed clothes in three months.

(Kirk scans horizon. After long pause--)

If you're looking for Spock, he's not up there. Leonard's speaking at a Creation Con.

KIRK: Please, don't mention CONS to me. Couldn't he have sent a stand in?

MCCOY: I'm a doctor, not a stunt coordinator! *(MCCOY and KIRK exit)*

(Table center stage. Spock enters in bathrobe and towel and sits behind it. Offstage, we hear voice of COMPUTER.)

COMPUTER: *(Like a game show host)* All right, welcome our returning champion, Mr. Spock, former corpse and Captain of the USS ENTERPRISE. Yesterday you picked 'Vulcans for 20'. Are you ready? Good! Who said logic is the cement of our civilization--

SPOCK: *(Slaps a buzzer)* Gene Roddenberry.

COMPUTER: Correct, Mr. Spock. Up 20.

SPOCK: 'Klingons' for 10.

COMPUTER: What Klingon said, "Despicable is good."

SPOCK: Eddie Murphy.

(Bells ring. WOMAN enters, carrying a toaster.)

COMPUTER: Congratulations, Spock! You've won this deluxe GE laser food rearranger. It slices, it dices, it turns peanut butter into filet mignon and it bathes the sehlat! Now, you can stop, OR take one more question and what's behind curtain number one.

(WOMAN holds up sign reading "AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION TIME.")

SPOCK: *(After pause.)* I'll take the curtain.

COMPUTER: And your category is 'Miscellaneous'. Are you ready, Mr. Spock?

SPOCK: I am.

COMPUTER: How do you feel?
How do you feel?

AMANDA: *(Enters)* What is it Spock? *(WOMAN exits)*

SPOCK: It was illogical, Mother.

AMANDA: What, the question?

SPOCK: No, the curtain, Mother. I should never have picked the curtain. It was an illogical choice.

AMANDA: Of course. You're half human.

SPOCK: I am?

AMANDA: Spock, you're my son.

SPOCK: But, Father --

AMANDA: Mother.

SPOCK: Mother. I don't want to be human. I don't like humans. Father told me to be a real VULCAN's Vulcan.

AMANDA: Spock, Father doesn't always know best.

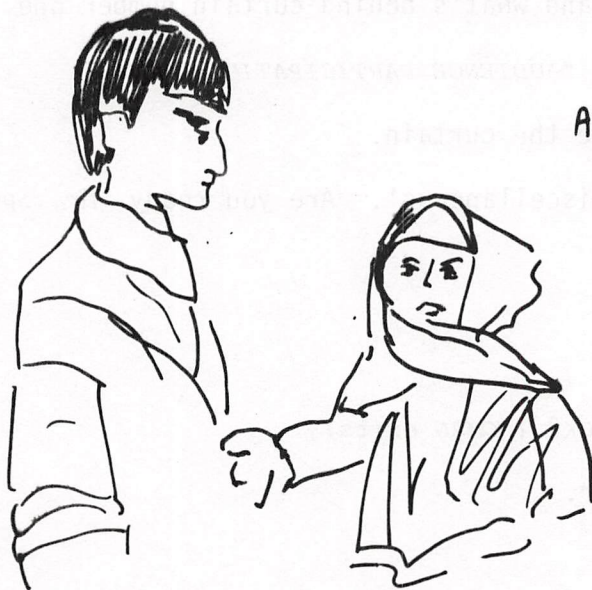
SPOCK: But all I want to be is... logical!

SONG: "Computer" to "Matchmaker" from Fiddler on the Roof

AMANDA: COMPUTER, COMPUTER, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
THIS ISN'T FAIR! GIVE BACK MY SON!
HE HAD A CHANCE TO BE HUMAN AT LAST,
FORGETTING HIS VULCAN PAST.

COMPUTER, COMPUTER, TEACH HIM TO SWEAR.
MAKE HIM STOP USING THAT BOWL ON HIS HAIR!
I DON'T MEAN TO ASK FOR ATILLA THE HUN
JUST GIVE ME A HUMAN SON!

COM-PU-TER, I WAS HIS MOTHER
THE FIRST TIME FOR ALMOST SIXTY YEARS
BUT HE CHOSE TO BE LIKE HIS FATHER --
OH, THAT ONE COULD DRIVE EVEN SURAK TO TEARS.



*Amanda (Nancy Kippax)
to Spock (Russ Volker)
"Father doesn't always
know best"*

SPOCK: Mother, I must point out that Surak never gave in to flagrant outbursts --

AMANDA: Don't tell me about Surak, Spock. I know Surak. *(Puts her fingers against her head, imitating pointed ears. Sings:)*

VULCAN, OH VULCAN, HAVE I GOTTA WAY FOR YOU
IT'S FLAWLESS! IT'S COLD! IT'S DAMN ANNOYING, TOO!
BUT WHAT OF FEELINGS, FOR FAM-LY, FOR ME, TOO?
IF I'M TO HAVE GRANDCHILDREN I'D BETTER HAVE THEM NOW
BUT YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH JIM KIRK -- DON'T ASK ME HOW!

COMPUTER, LISTEN I'M PLEADING
PLEASE GIVE ME A SON I CAN LOVE
TAKE BACK ALL THAT STUFF YOU'VE BEEN FEEDING
AND TEACH HIM SOME OLD-FASHIONED LOVE.

COMPUTER, COMPUTER, GIVE ME A SON
ONE I CAN LOVE, ONE I CAN HOLD,
I WANT GRANDCHILDREN BEFORE I'M TOO OLD

SOOO...GIVE ME A SON, NOT A MACHINE
OH, HE'S SO COLD! WHY, HE'S SO MEAN!
PLEASE GIVE ME A HUMAN SON!

SPOCK: Mother, I have to go.

AMANDA: To save your friends? Because the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the one? Because of human feelings of friendship and loyalty which draw you to Earth to give testimony?

SPOCK: No. Your singing is hurting my ears. *(Exit SPOCK and AMANDA)*

Enter KIRK, MCCOY, SCOTTY, SULU, CHEKOV, UHURA, SAAVIK. Table for helm and seven chairs lined up center stage.

KIRK: All ashore that's going ashore!
(Crosses to SAAVIK) Saavik, we were going to give you a tiny part in this movie, but since Paramount paid so much to get me, they just can't afford it. Boys!

(SCOTTY and MCCOY drag SAAVIK offstage)

Everybody ready?

SCOTTY: Are we ever?

UHURA: Sugar, I was born ready. I've been on this planet so long
Chekov's starting to look good!

(CHEKOV pulls out breath spray and sprays his mouth)



A dismayed Saavik (Renee Volker) being told the studio couldn't afford her because they'd spent too much on Kirk

KIRK: We're leaving, Mr. Chekov! Anyway, you're still too young for her.

CHEKOV: Cossack!

KIRK: Admiral Cossack to you.

(Enter SPOCK carrying a bag on a stick. Looks paranoid.)

Spock! What are you doing here?

SPOCK: Running away from home. Can I come with you, please?

MCCOY: Your mother been singing again?

KIRK: Have a seat, Spock.

SPOCK: Thank you, Admiral.

KIRK: Jim, Spock. My name is Jim.

SPOCK: I'm sorry. I must have forgotten, Jack.

KIRK: Jim!

MCCOY: Jim, are you crazy? You can't take him to Earth! His engines have warped out!

KIRK: Bones, give it a rest.

MCCOY: But Jim, He's dangerous! His bathrobe and towel don't match, for God's sake!

KIRK: Well, Spock never was one for fashion. I mean, green hardly goes with anything! He'll be his old self again, you'll see.

MCCOY: That's what I'm afraid of!

KIRK: Mr. Sulu. Take us home.

SULU: Is the movie over already?

SCOTTY: Admiral, there's something you should know about the engines---

KIRK: Not now, Scotty. Uhura, has the Federation answered our request for escort?

UHURA: No sir. All I'm picking up is this recorded message. I wish they'd turn it down, I can't hear a thing over it.

KIRK: Let's hear it.

VOICE: This is the President of the Federation. A large tin can has come into Earth orbit and its strange signal has immobilized Starfleet. Avoid Earth at all costs! But, if you're feeling heroic -- GET ME THE HELL OUT OF HERE!

SPOCK: Fascinating. I wonder what the signal sounds like?

KIRK: Uhura?

(Sound effect: DONALD DUCK)

SULU: How awful!.

SCOTTY: Sir, about the engines --

KIRK: Shut up, Scotty. Spock, what do you make of it?

SPOCK: I had no time to review the Walt Disney files, but if my suspicion is correct --

KIRK: Yes?

SPOCK: I don't think the signal was aimed only at Earth's duck population, but all the waterfowl!

KIRK: Maybe... even... fish!

SPOCK: Possibly.

UHURA: Clams!

CHEKOV: Russian Squids!

SCOTTY: Oysters! Shrimp!

SULU: Kelp! Kelp!

KIRK: That's enough! We're running out of marine life!

MCCOY: Isn't that the point of this movie?

KIRK: Shhh!

MCCOY: Sorry.

KIRK: Uhura, how would the signal sound underwater?

(Sound effect: Whale song)

SPOCK: Whales!

MCCOY: Are you suggesting that the probe is transmitting a signal to humpback whales, a species extinct for two hundred years?

SULU: And that the only way to save the earth is to respond with actual whale songs?

CHEKOV: And the only place to find whales is in the year 1986?

UHURA: That we should go back in time, get two whales --

SCOTTY: And bring them back to the 23rd century in THIS?

SPOCK: No. But that does sound like a pretty good script for a movie.

ALL: NOW JUST A MINUTE!!

MCCOY: I think that's my line! (To Kirk) Jim! This is crazy!

KIRK: Why, Bones? Someone's got to do it!

SONG: "c'est Moi" from Camelot

SOMEONE'S GOT TO GET THE WHALES, HE'S GOT TO SAVE THE EARTH
SUCCEEDING WHERE LOW-PAID EXTRAS ALWAYS FAIL
TRAVEL BACK ON A WARP THROUGH TIME
GET TWO HUMPBACKS JUST IN THEIR PRIME
AND MAKE THEM FORCE THAT ROTTEN PROBE TO TURN ITS TAIL

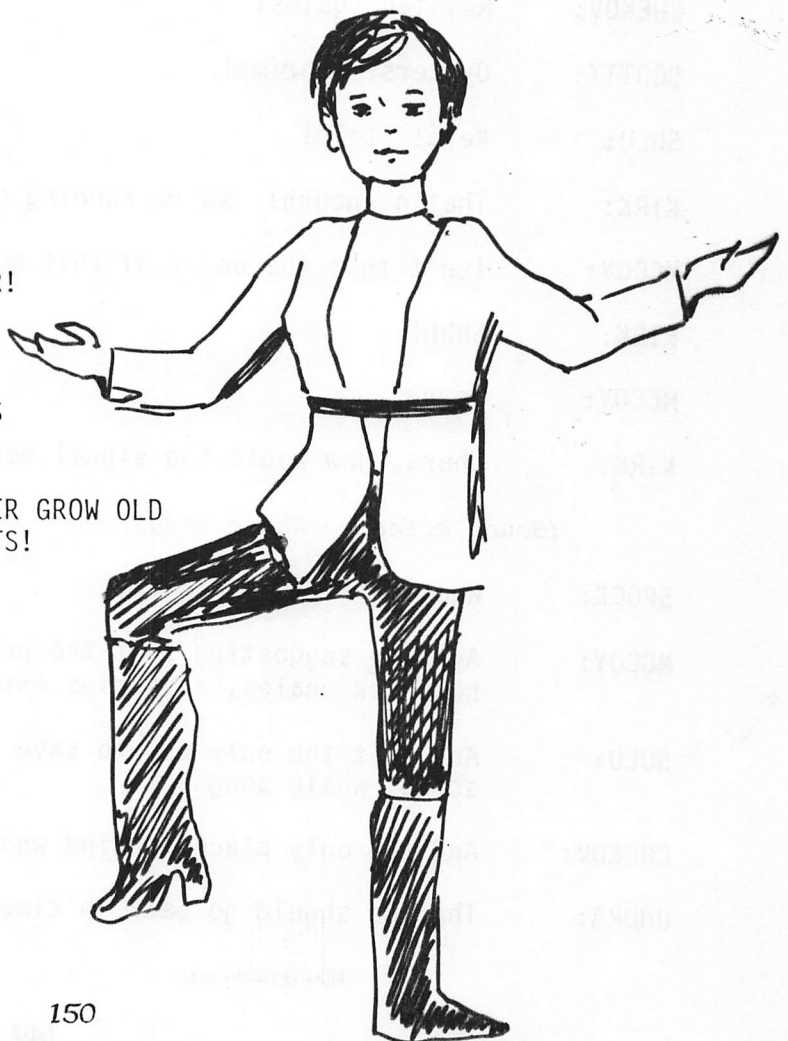
IT MAY BE INSANE BUT SOMEONE'S GOT TO GO FOR IT
SOMEONE WHO CAN GET THE PROBE OUT OF OUR HAIR
BUT WHERE IN THE WORLD
IS THERE IN THE WORLD
A MAN SO EXTRAORDINAIRE?

C'EST MOI, C'EST MOI
I'M FORCED TO ADMIT
WHO'S SUITED FOR THIS KIND OF WORK
THE ADMIRAL WHO
BROUGHT SPOCK BACK TO YOU
C'EST MOI, I'M JAMES T. KIRK.

I'VE NEVER LOST TO KHAN
OR CHRIS LLOYD
I'M SIMPLY THE BEST BY FAR
WHEN SHIELDS ARE RAISED
I START TO AWAKE
I GUESS THAT'S WHY I'M A STAR!

C'EST MOI, C'EST MOI
THE STUDIO CHOSE
TO PAY OFF ALL OF THEIR DEBTS
AND HERE AM I
WITH TALENT UNTOLD
EXCEPTIONALLY PAID, I'LL NEVER GROW OLD
JAMES KIRK IS THE BEST IT GETS!

Kirk
(Lance Woods)
"somebody's got to
do it"



KIRK: Stations, please! Spock, get us ready for time warp! Scotty, how are the engines?

SCOTTY: I've been trying to tell you, Captain --

KIRK: Good, good. Okay, let's do it!

SPOCK: Warp speed... !

MCCOY: *(To SPOCK)* Are you really going to go along with this scheme?

SPOCK: Affirmative.

MCCOY: At least your sense of humor's returned.

SPOCK: *(Busy)* The hell it has.

MCCOY: That's my line, too!

SPOCK: We are in time warp.

(Lights to Dark)

SCOTTY: Computer? Computer?

UHURA: ... Said it would pick up anything...

SULU: I was born --

CHEKOV: AARGH!!

KIRK: We must be going back in time! Those lines don't come until later. This thing is really amazing!

MCCOY: Shhh!

KIRK: Sorry.

(Lights Up. SCOTTY exits while stage is dark)

Is everybody okay?

(SCOTTY enters, dumps a handful of salt on KIRK's lap)

What's this?

SCOTTY: *(Pleased)* It was our dilithium crystals, Admiral.

KIRK: What happened?

SCOTTY: *(Again pleased)* They disintegrated, sir.

KIRK: Really?

SCOTTY: No, you bloody stupid pile o' haggis, not REALLY! I was only playin' a wee JOKE!

KIRK: Oh, well --

SCOTTY: WE GOT NO DILITHIUM, YE BORGUS FRAT!

KIRK: *(Panicking)* Well, why didn't you tell me!?

SCOTTY: I TRIED!!

*(Both grab each other's cuffs and shake. A slapping contest ensues.
KIRK comes to his senses)*

KIRK: All right, nobody PANIC! *(To SPOCK)* WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO!?

SPOCK: Well, Jeeves...

KIRK: Jim.

SPOCK: Joe, sorry. As I recall, dilithium crystals can be reassembled by using photons produced during nuclear fission reactions -- a dangerous form of energy production employed during this time period.

KIRK: Spock, we've been using dilithium for twenty years, and I've never heard that before.

SPOCK: I believe, Jock, that this is what you humans refer to as a...

MCCOY: Cheap plot device?

SPOCK: Precisely.

KIRK: But where can we find a fission reaction? Isn't it unethical and time consuming to go out and cause them?

SPOCK: I believe that naval vessels at this time employ such reactors. They would be top security.

KIRK: Chekov can do that, he won't arouse any suspicions.

CHEKOV: Nyet.

MCCOY: Jim, Chekov's a Russian.

KIRK: Bones, I'm not stupid.

MCCOY: But this is an extremely paranoid culture!

KIRK: Bones, how paranoid can they be? They're our ancestors.

CHEKOV and UHURA:
Speak for yourself!

KIRK: Sorry. You've got nothing to worry about, Mr. Chekov -- but wear clean underwear for scene 23. Uhura, heard any good whale songs lately?

UHURA: I'm receiving some from San Francisco.

SULU: San Francisco, I was --

KIRK: How convenient. We just happen to be filming in San Francisco. Spock and I will track down the whales.

SULU: Hey! I was --

SCOTTY: Admiral, what are you going to DO with the beasties AFTER we beam them up?

KIRK: Couldn't we just give them a deck of cards? *(To SPOCK)* Do whales get spacesick?

SULU: Hey, I was born --

SCOTTY: Ye might consider a TANK, Admiral..

KIRK: Right! Good man, Scotty. You and Bones can handle that.

MCCOY: Yipee Cayo Cayay.

SULU: *(Jumping for attention)* Hey!

KIRK: Oh. I'm sorry, Mr. Sulu. You can go with Bones and Scotty. All right, let's go.

(Exit ALL but SULU and MCCOY)

MCCOY: Were you trying to say something, Sulu?

SULU: Ah, forget it.

(Exit SULU and MCCOY. Clear stage. Sign reads: WELCOME TO THE 20TH CENTURY. Sound effect: Horn)

KIRK: *(Enters)* Well, double dumb ass on you!

(BRIDGE CREW follow KIRK. ALL survey the audience)

MCCOY: It's a miracle these people haven't asked for their money back yet!

KIRK: Money? Uh-oh...

SPOCK: May I suggest we avail ourselves of some appropriate currency, Admiral?

KIRK: We could make a movie! They pay well!

UHURA: Only for you, honey!

SPOCK: If I may... *(KIRK nods)* That shop across the street. *(Exit ALL)*

(Table Stage Right. SHOPKEEPER stands behind it. Sign reads: EXTRATERRESTRIALS GET CASH HERE.)

KIRK: Excuse me, sir...

SHOPKEEPER: Yes, may I help you?

KIRK: How much can you give me for these? *(Holds up glasses)*
They're 500 ... er, 200 years old.

SHOPKEEPER: *(Takes glasses)* Hmmm... *(Eyes them carefully. Then eyes KIRK and SPOCK even more carefully.)* What, these lousy things? Look, there's even a broken lens.

KIRK: But they're 200 years old!

SHOPKEEPER: Oh, all right. How about fifteen... no, twelve -- twelve dollars.

KIRK: *(Looks back and forth)* Is that good? *(Chortles with glee)*
Why did you laugh? *(To SPOCK)* Do you think he's hiding something?

SPOCK: *(Raising an eyebrow)* Admiral, I hardly --

KIRK: Shut up. *(To SHOPKEEPER)* Are you trying to rip us the hell off?

SHOPKEEPER: Look, buddy, I never wanted to work in an antique shop.

KIRK: What?

SHOPKEEPER: I always wanted to be... a lumberjack!

SPOCK: This statement is a non sequitor...

SHOPKEEPER: Yes! A lumberjack! Leaping from tree to tree as they float down the mighty rivers of British Columbia! The larch! The mighty sequoia! *(All during SHOPKEEPER's tirage, KIRK is trying to insert a "shut up" or an "excuse me.")* The Dutch pine! The giant deadwood! *(KIRK resigns)* The smell of fresh cut timber! The crash of mighty trees!

KIRK: *(Gesturing toward SHOPKEEPER)* Spock?

(SPOCK applies the nerve pinch; SHOPKEEPER collapses into a quiet, hapless pile. KIRK looks at body in dismay, SPOCK in consideration.)

Prop!

(Two stage hands enter and carry off the limp form of the SHOPKEEPER)

SPOCK: Admiral - we have effectively removed one immediate problem. However, our larger purpose of acquiring a suitable quantity of contemporary currency remains.

KIRK: Piece of cake. *(Goes through cash register)*

SPOCK: *(Tactfully, or as much so as possible)* Admiral, are you certain that theft is the best solution to our task?

KIRK: Spock, a wise man once said, 'Property is theft, right? Therefore, theft is property.' Ergo, anything we steal is ours.

SPOCK: Before I point out the fallacies in that proposition, I should be interested in learning the identity of this so-called wise man.

KIRK: *(Closing the cash register and turning toward the door)*
Zaphod Beebelbrox. *(Exit ALL)*

(Street. Enter ALL. KIRK doles out money)

KIRK: That's it, so watch for blue light specials. *(Waits. Everybody stares)* Well? Go!

CHEKOV: Where are we going?

KIRK: Where --

MCCOY: Please! Don't start. *(Exit MCCOY, SCOTTY, SULU, UHURA, CHEKOV)*

KIRK: Well, here we are.

SPOCK: So it would appear. Can you recommend a logical course of action?

KIRK: You didn't notice any whales?

SPOCK: No, but calculating their location should be a simple matter of deriving the polynomial by which *(EXTRA enters carrying sign: WHALES THIS WAY)* the integral of the multiplier --

KIRK: This way?

SPOCK: I believe I just said that. *(Exit SPOCK and KIRK)*

(Desk Stage Right. Enter SCOTTY and MCCOY, looking impatient. NICHOLS silly walks on stage. Eventually works his way to SCOTTY and MCCOY)

NICHOLS: Yes, I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, but I'm afraid my walk has become rather silly this morning. Now, what was it again?

SCOTTY: We're interested in buying some plexiglass to construct a tank to hold 400 tons of water.

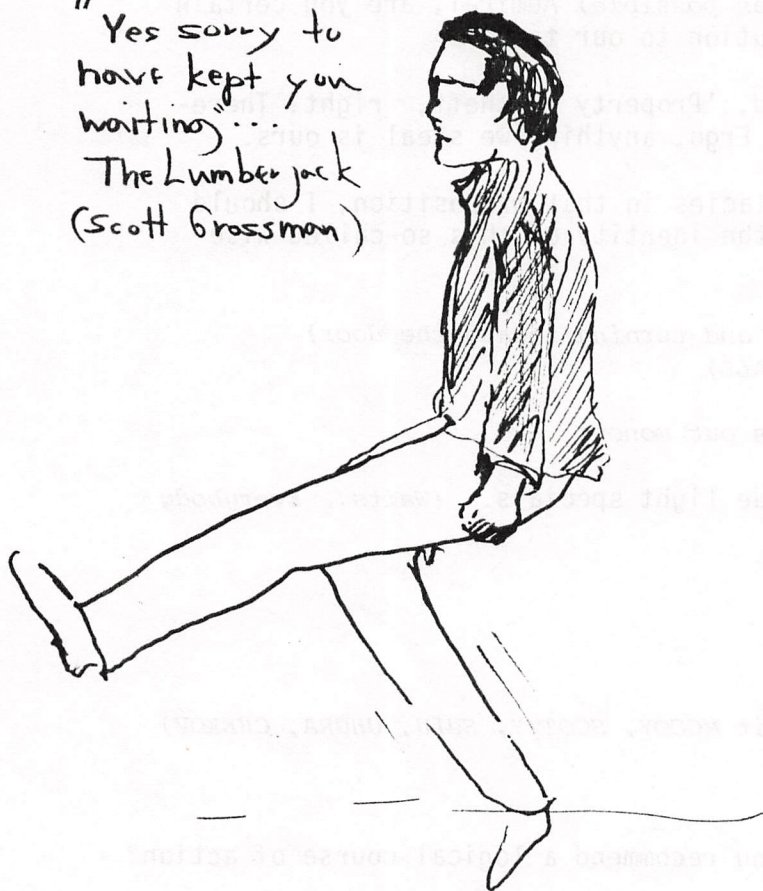
NICHOLS: I see. That would be six inches thick. Now, how soon?

SCOTTY: This afternoon.

MCCOY: At the latest.

NICHOLS: That's not a lot of time, is it?

"Yes sorry to
have kept you
waiting"...
The Lumberjack
(Scott Grossman)



MCCOY: You wanna tell him the rest?

SCOTTY: -ahem- Not really.

MCCOY: Flip for it?

SCOTTY: Flip what?

MCCOY: Yeah. We'll do it together. One, two, three.... Scotty!

SCOTTY: I was waiting for five!

BOTH: We don't have any money.

SCOTTY: But we have got a dead Klingon (A pause)

MCCOY: (Smacks him) Shut up!

NICHOLS: Professor Scott, the very real problem isn't one of finance. Our products are essential in the construction of housewares, art, office buildings, moose cages, relief pictures of Henry

Kissinger, and junk food. In order to meet your deadline, I would have to drop everything for a day. You understand, I have my overhead to worry about.

MCCOY: I'd hate to see how he drives.

SCOTTY: Dr. Nichols, suppose I fixed it so you never had to worry about your overhead again?

NICHOLS: And how would you do that, you scrounging bastard?

MCCOY: (Points to desk) Perhaps the professor could use your computer?

NICHOLS: Oh, yes, be my guest. I mean, that's what made this country great, isn't it? (Gets up. SCOTTY sits down. NICHOLS elbows SCOTTY's head) Oops! Sorry.

SCOTTY: Computer?... Computer?

MCCOY: It must be deaf.

SCOTTY: Aye, and I'll bet it walks funny, too!

NICHOLS: Well, if you could just use the keyboard. I mean, some people... I don't know what it is...

SCOTTY: Keyboard?

NICHOLS: Right there where the keys are, sorry if it's confusing.

SCOTTY: *(Types for about a second very rapidly)* Time consuming piece o' junk!

NICHOLS: *(Peers)* What the bloody hell is transparent aluminum? Are you tryin' t' be funny?

SCOTTY: Laddie, don't you even recognize 23rd century technology when ye sees it? I'm offerin' you a chance to be the richest man in the world!

NICHOLS: I don't want to be the richest man in the world.

MCCOY: Oh, no...

NICHOLS: I want to be... a lumberjack!

SCOTTY: *(Advancing)* Dr. Nichols, I'm warning ye --

NICHOLS: Yes! A lumberjack! Leaping from tree to tree as they --

(SCOTTY punches NICHOLS in the stomach. He doubles over)

float ... down --

(MCCOY pounds NICHOLS on the back with a 2x4. He does a back flip and falls)

SCOTTY and MCCOY: PROP!

(Prop crew comes and drags off NICHOLS. SCOTTY goes to desk and goes through papers)

MCCOY: Scotty, what are you doing?

SCOTTY: Just a wee bit o' forgery.

MCCOY: What about the transparent aluminum program?

SCOTTY: Let 'im keep it. It'll keep him out o' the forrests.

MCCOY: But aren't you changing the future by leaving it?

SCOTTY: Aren't we already doin' that anyway? *(MCCOY shrugs. Exit ALL)*

(Clear stage. Sign reads: ALAMEDA NAVAL BASE. NOWHERE ELSE WILL YOU FIND NUCLEAR VESSELS SO LIGHTLY GUARDED! Enter UHURA and CHEKOV)

UHURA: Now, where would we find a nuclear vessel?

CHEKOV: Look! *(Points to sign)*

UHURA: That looks good.

CHEKOV: But how ken ve find de base?

UHURA: I suppose we just ask someone...

CHEKOV: *(to PASSERBY)* Excuse me, could you tell us how to get to the nuclear wessels at Alameda?

PASSERBY: Buzz off, Ruskie!

(Assorted Extras pass by, either ignoring or rebuffing UHURA and CHEKOV as they plead for assistance. Finally, PASSERBY reappears, and responds to their queries)

CHEKOV: Could you help us find de nawel base at Alameda?

PASSERBY: Ah, yes. Take the subway and get off at the Alameda station, then go north on the Alameda Avenue until you get to the post office. Turn left onto Naval Base Drive and keep going until you see the gate to the base. Wait until nightfall, then cut through the fence about forty yards up from the gate, where you'll be out of sight. Quietly sneak across the grounds until you get to the dock. When nobody's looking, dart to the nearest vessel's mooring and shimmy along them until you're aboard ship. You ought to dress in black to avoid being spotted. When the coast is clear on the deck, find a stairway and descend to deck two - that's where the reactor is. Every third hatch along the main accessway will have two guards - you'll have to overpower them quickly and quietly, before they can sound the alarm. Proceede aft to the fifth door on the starboard side, and that will take you straight to the reactor. All right?

(UHURA nods; she has been taking notes)

CHEKOV: Vait a minute. I asked you before, and you told me to 'buzz off.' Vy did you tell us dis time?

PASSERBY: Listen, comrade. I didn't want to give away military secrets. I always wanted to be a lumberjack!

UHURA: What?

PASSERBY: Yes! A lumberjack! Leaping from tree to tree as they --

(UHURA and CHEKOV look at each other, then CHEKOV pushes PASSERBY offstage. Sound effect: Horn and screeching brakes, followed by a scream and loud thud. Exit CHEKOV and UHURA.)

(Clear stage. Sign reads: CETACEAN INSTITUTE. Enter GILLIAN, followed by KIRK and SPOCK. GILLIAN speaks to the audience, treating them as the tourists.)

GILLIAN: And now, the pride and joy of our institute *(gestures stage right)* a male and female humpback whale. *(Enter GEORGE and GRACIE, stage right)* They wandered into the bay last summer looking for a job in television. We call them George and Gracie.

(Recording: Michael Jackson's "Beat It")

What you're hearing is recorded whalesong.

(KIRK and SPOCK are standing to the side)

KIRK: Bleah! Damn, that's bad!

SPOCK: Joshua, why do you use these colorful metaphors?

KIRK: You mean the swearing? Nobody listens to you otherwise.

SPOCK: I see. Then if this is to be our most successful movie --

KIRK: We've got to swear like sailors. Just pay attention.

(KIRK joins GILLIAN and listens, facing her. SPOCK wanders offstage)

GILLIAN: We haven't translated the songs. Some critics have called them 'mindless gibberish' but I'm convinced the whales are intelligent.

KIRK: You can say that after hearing those sounds?

GILLIAN: Well, they're very friendly.

KIRK: But... intelligent?

GILLIAN: More intelligent than some people on this stage.

KIRK: Well, I think you're cute, too.

GILLIAN: *(Turns her back to him, speaks to the audience)* We don't know why the whales sing.

(SPOCK comes up from behind them and goes over to mind meld with GRACIE)

EXTRA: Maybe he's calling a cop on that man!

GILLIAN: What the HELL!? *(Crosses to SPOCK. GEORGE and GRACIE exit)*
What the hell are you doing?

SPOCK: Attempting the hell to get some laughs.

GILLIAN: What the hell were you doing to my whales?

SPOCK: They are the hell not the hell your whales... the hell.

KIRK: Spock, what the hell...

SPOCK: Admiral, we must act the hell fast.

GILLIAN: All right! Get the hell out!

KIRK: Let's get the hell out of here!

SPOCK: Hell, yes! (*Exit ALL*)



"Looking for a job in television..." George (Ian Bonds) and Gracie (Venny Eliot)

(*Clear stage. Enter KIRK and SPOCK*)

KIRK: Spock, about these colorful metaphors --

SPOCK: Is something the hell wrong?

KIRK: The hell there is -- I mean! Ohhhh... hell!

SONG: "Why Can't the Vulcans" to "Why Can't the English" from My Fair Lady

WHY CAN'T THE VULCANS TEACH THEIR CHILDREN HOW TO SWEAR?
ALL OTHER RACES SAY THINGS THAT VULCANS WOULDN'T DARE.
IF YOU SPOKE AS THEY DID, SPOCK, INSTEAD OF THE WAY YOU DO
WHY, YOU MIGHT BE STAR MATERIAL, TOO!

SPOCK: (*Speaks*) I beg your pardon, sir?

KIRK: A VULCAN'S LACK OF SWEARING ABSOLUTELY CLASSIFIES HIM
THE MOMENT HE SPEAKS HE MAKES SOME AWFUL TELLERITE DESPISE HIM.
WHEN IT COMES TO SWEARING VULCANS, I'M AFRAID WE'RE OUT OF LUCK
OH, WHY CAN'T A VULCAN JUST SAY --

SPOCK: I MUST DISAGREE, SIR, WITH LANGUAGE AS VOLATILE AS THIS
SINCE KOHLINAR, I WON'T EVEN SAY --

KIRK: (*Speaks*) What?

SPOCK: MY MOTHER AND MY FATHER HAVE ALWAYS TOLD ME THIS:
(*Speaks*) Well, actually, I can't remember what it is.

KIRK: WHY CAN'T THE VULCANS TEACH THEIR CHILDREN HOW TO CURSE?
ORION LEARN ORION, THE KLINGONS SOMETHING WORSE.

EVERY ROMULAN LEARNS HIS LANGUAGE WITH GREAT GLEE...

(*Speaks*) The Romulans don't care what they do, actually, as long as they're honest about it.

SPOCK: ANDORIANS SPEAK ANDORIAN AT THE RATE OF DESERT LIGHTNING
BUT HUMANS CORRUPT THEIR LANGUAGE IN WAYS THAT I FIND
FRIGHTENING...

KIRK: I GUESS IT'S HOPELESS SO THERE'S NOTHING TO DISCUSS
OH, WHY CAN'T THE VULCANS...WHY CAN'T THE VULCANS...
... LEARN...TO...CUSS?

(*Sound effect: Communicator bleep*)

CHEKOV: (*Voiceover*) Admiral, we have found the wessel!

KIRK: Was it difficult?

CHEKOV: Oh, wery, sir. But, the wessel is the ENTERPRISE.

KIRK: Keep me posted. And... stay off the Wodka.

(*Enter GILLIAN*)

GILLIAN: Well, the Lone Ranger and Tonto. Where are you going now?

KIRK: Oh, raise a little hell.

GILLIAN: What do you want with my whales?

SPOCK: They are not --

KIRK: Spock! Why don't you go back to the... park.

SPOCK: And do what?

KIRK: Just... Spock off! (*Exit SPOCK*)

GILLIAN: So, what's your story?

KIRK: The truth?

GILLIAN: I'm all ears.

KIRK: Please, don't say that. The truth...

GILLIAN: Let me guess. You popped in out of thin air. No-- you're a little green man from Alpha Centauri.

KIRK: You really have heard all the lines. Actually, I'm from the 23rd century and I need two humpback whales to repopulate the species or a giant tuna can's gonna turn us all into ravioli.

GILLIAN: So?

KIRK: I need your help.

GILLIAN: Okay, I'm in. What do I do?

KIRK: Wow, that was easy. *(Puts his arm around her and starts to explain)*

GILLIAN: But I'm not, buster, so keep your hands off!

KIRK: This century is so backward! *(Exit ALL)*

*(ENTERPRISE Reactor Room. Sign reads: GET YOUR PHOTONS HERE.
Enter CHEKOV and UHURA)*

UHURA: *(Points)* There.

CHEKOV: *(Holds up a Dustbuster)* Are you sure this will work?

UHURA: The guy at the store said it would pick up anything.

(CHEKOV shrugs, holds it to the wall, turns it on. UHURA checks her tricorder)

(That should be enough.)

CHEKOV: That was quick! It must have been made in Russia.

UHURA: *(Shakes her head)* Don't let the crew hear you say that. We'd better go. *(Flips communicator)* Scotty? Photon's on! Hurry, before the lumberjacks get here.

SCOTTY: *(Voiceover)* Lass? I can only beam ye in one at a time.

UHURA: Malfunction?

SCOTTY: Special effects crew's gone on strike. There's a line outside from here to Edinboro!

CHEKOV: *(Hands Dustbuster to UHURA)* You go first. I'll be less conspicuous.

UHURA: *(To Communicator)* Beam me up, sugar.

(Lights to Dark. Sound effect: Transporter. Exit UHURA)

(Lights to Full)

CHEKOV: *(To Communicator)* Scotty? Oh, Scotty?

SCOTTY: *(Voiceover)* I can't hear ye, lad! The picketers have a megaphone!

CHEKOV: Scotty? Scotty? Those... COMMUNISTS!

(Enter MPs)

MP #1: Freeze!

CHEKOV: Freeze? In San Francisco? Now, in Siberia, maybe --

(MPs advance. CHEKOV runs offstage. A scream is heard. Exit MPs)

(BIRD OF PREY set up. UHURA is seated. Enter KIRK, SCOTTY, GILLIAN)

SCOTTY: Well, I'm glad ye approve of our aquarium, Doctor.

KIRK: Now all we have to do is pick up the whales.

GILLIAN: *(Suddenly realizing, slaps her forehead)* Oh, no!

SCOTTY: V-8, Doctor?

GILLIAN: I just remembered, they're releasing the whales tonight! They're in Alaska by now!

KIRK: Then we'll have to go after them!

SCOTTY: Uh, I'm afraid...

KIRK: Scotty, you can't tell me the engines won't take it.

SCOTTY: No, but we still canna go.

GILLIAN: Why? What kind of spaceship is this?

SCOTTY: It's a spaceship with a picket line outside!

KIRK: Have we got phasers?

Scotty
(Dave Keefer)
"General Order 26. Never
strike your engineer."



(Enter SPOCK)

SPOCK: Admiral, aren't you forgetting something?

KIRK: *(Scratches his head)* Um... oh! Not that dumb prime directive again!

SPOCK: Ensign Chekov!

KIRK: The little Russian guy!

SPOCK: Leaving without him would be most inadvisable. We cannot afford a lawsuit for breach of contract.

KIRK: Well, if we traded in this Bird -- no? Where is he?

(Enter UHURA)

UHURA: He's in General Hospital.

GILLIAN: That's on Studio Nine at ABC.

KIRK: Will you help us? I don't know that network.

GILLIAN: Do I get that part in Star Trek V? Please? *(Kirk shakes his head)*
Okay, might as well make the most of this part while I got it.
(Exit ALL)

(Table on Stage. CHEKOV is lying under a sheet. DOCTOR and ASSISTANT are preparing to operate. KIRK, MCCOY, and GILLIAN rush onstage)

MCCOY: This is the operating room? It looks like a table on a stage at the Sheraton!

KIRK: Bones, we are 300 years in the past.

MCCOY: It's like the Dark Ages. I'm expecting the Spanish Inquisition any minute.

DOCTOR: Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition!

MCCOY: What?

DOCTOR: Sorry. *(Pause)* Who are you?!

MCCOY: I'm a doctor, this man is my patient.

DOCTOR: I'm calling the police!

MCCOY: How do you diagnose --

DOCTOR: Fundascopic examination --

MCCOY: Fundascopic examination is unrevealing in these cases!

DOCTOR: *(Looks confused)* Well, you know, I didn't want to be a doctor --

(With a look of disgust and a shake of his head, KIRK fires his phaser. Sound effect: Phaser firing. DOCTOR falls. ASSISTANT drags him offstage)

KIRK: What he needs is a vocational guidance counselor.

(MCCOY moves to CHEKOV, places a gadget on his head)

MCCOY: He's ready to go, Jim.

KIRK: Pavel?

CHEKOV: My... part...is... too small!

MCCOY: That's our boy!

GILLIAN: Let's go! I hear the guards!

(LONE RANGER and TONTO enter. KIRK et al rush CHEKOV off stage. LONE RANGER and TONTO follow. ALL emerge from curtains and chase through audience. Recording: Hospital Chase from Star Trek IV. At final bars, lights go Dark and KIRK, GILLIAN, MCCOY and CHEKOV enter stage. Lights to full on final bar of Music)

(Enter SULU, who helps MCCOY get CHEKOV offstage)

KIRK: How will we find the whales?

GILLIAN: They're tagged with a radio transmitter.

KIRK: Please, what's the frequency?

GILLIAN: 410 Mega-hertz.

KIRK: *(Turns to leave)* Well, it's been real.

GILLIAN: I'm going with you

KIRK: The hell you are!

GILLIAN: Admiral, I've got to help those whales!

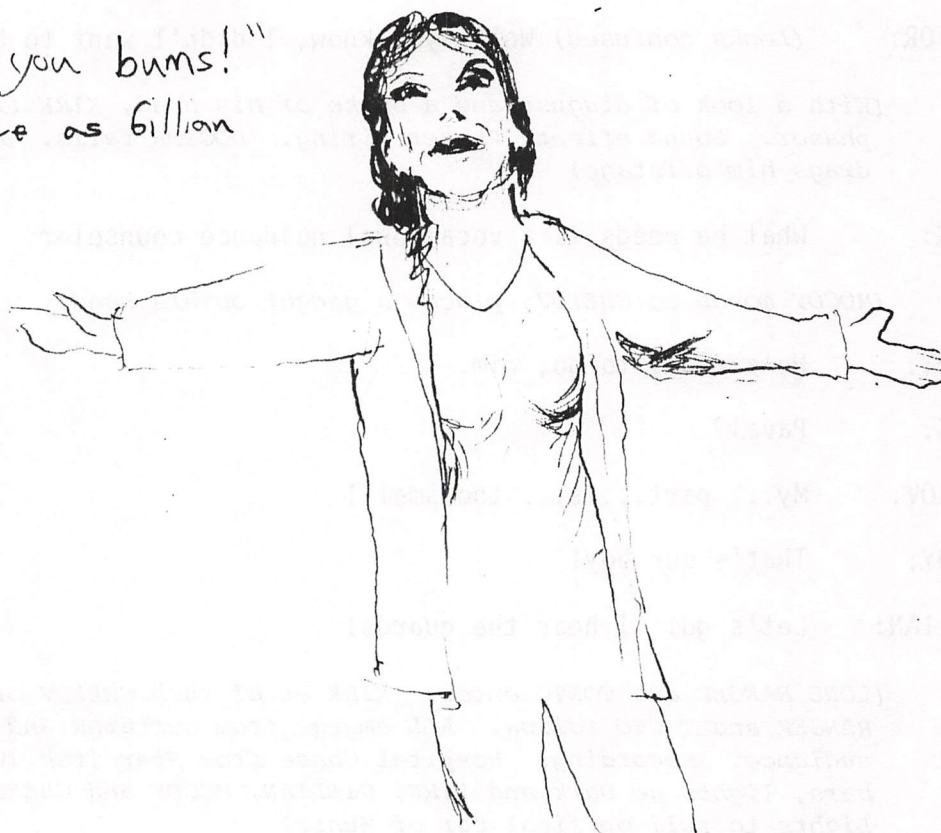
KIRK: But, Gillian, it's risky! We might never make it! If this movie doesn't clear \$20 million in the first week --

GILLIAN: Admiral, let me explain something to you...

(SONG: "I'm Goin' Back With You" to "I Put My Hand In" from Hello, Dolly)

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A WOMAN WHO TAKES CARE OF THINGS
FOR THE WARMTH AND SATISFACTION IT ENTAILS
I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A WOMAN WHO TAKES CARE OF THINGS
LIKE BROKEN UP HEARTS, OVERDRAFTS, AND WHALES.

"Beam me up, you bums!"
Suzanne Elmore as Gillian



WHEN A MAN BORN IN I-O-WA
TELLS ME HE WORKS UP IN OUTER SPACE
MAYBE YOU'D THINK I'M NUTS TO LISTEN TO HIM AT ALL
BUT SINCE I DID I SHOULD THINK THAT
I'D BE IN THE WHOLE LONG HAUL

SO I'M GOING BACK WITH YOU
I'M GOING BACK WITH YOU
AND IT MAY BE INSANE OF ME
TO GIVE UP MY WHOLE LIFE FOR MY WHALES
BUT THIS IS THE ONLY WAY I'LL GET IN STAR TREK V
AND DON'T YOU HAND ME THAT BULL ABOUT NOT GETTING BACK ALIVE
CAUSE I'M GOING BACK WITH YOU
I'M GOING BACK WITH YOU

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A WOMAN WHO TAKES CARE OF THINGS
AND BY NOW I THINK I'VE PAID MY FINAL DUES
I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A WOMAN WHO TAKES CARE OF THINGS
AND I'M TELLIN' YOU I'M GOING BACK WITH YOU!

DON'T YOU TELL ME I WON'T FIT IN
CAUSE YOU GOT NO ONE ELSE FOR THE JOB
YOU'VE BEEN TREATIN' ME LIKE I WAS SOME DUMB JERK
BUT OH TODAY, YOU HAVE FINALLY MET YOUR MATCH ADMIRAL KIRK

DOUBLE DUMB ASS ON YOU, TOO
I'M GETTIN' IN THIS BIRD AND FLYIN'
AIN'T NO USE IN ANY CRYIN'
GET OUT OF MY WAY, OH, BLAST YOU
I KNOW HOW TO GET RIGHT PAST YOU.
I'VE SEEN DITSY SPOCK CAN DO IT
SO THERE MUST BE NOTHING TO IT

(Vulcan nerve pinches KIRK. He falls)

PRESSURE WITH THE THUMBS
BEAM ME UP, YOU BUMS!
CAUSE, I'M GOIN' BACK WITH YOU!

(GILLIAN drags KIRK offstage)

(BIRD OF PREY set. ALL CREW except SCOTTY at stations. KIRK and GILLIAN enter)

KIRK: You pinched me!

GILLIAN: Tell me you didn't enjoy it.

KIRK: Well...*(Jumps)* We've got to go! *(To SPOCK)* Where the hell's that power you promised me? *(SPOCK ignores him)* Spock? Oh, Spock? *(SPOCK looks up expectantly)* How soon can we leave, please, my Vulcan friend?

SPOCK: One damn minute, Admiral!

(SPOCK turns back to his board, looks puzzled. MCCOY notices and speaks to him)

MCCOY: Is there a problem, Spock?

SPOCK: Mr. Scott has not supplied me with the correct figures for the weight of whales and water. Our coefficient of acceleration and thus the feasibility of our time warp potential has radically altered.

MCCOY: Uh... 42?

SPOCK: I cannot solve the problem, either. Not without accurate data.

MCCOY: So, guess.

SPOCK: *(Unable to pronounce the word)* G-Gu-Gaaah--Gerrr--

MCCOY: Guess, Spock! Listen --

SONG: "Spock Be a Human" to "Luck Be a Lady" from Guys and Dolls

NOW YOU'RE HALF HUMAN, SPOCK
BUT SINCE YOU SORT OF DIED
THAT FAL TOR PAN
HAS ALL BUT BURNED AWAY YOUR HUMAN SIDE.

WE TRAVELED BACK THROUGH TIME
GOOD GOD, WE'RE SKIPPING BAIL!
SO, MAKE A GUESS AND MAKE IT GOOD
WE'VE GOT TO SAVE THESE WHALES.

COULD YOU BE MISSING MARBLES?
DID THEY LEAVE SOME WITH ME?
I WISH THAT PRIESTESS GAVE OUT GUARANTEES...

SPOCK, BE A HUMAN TONIGHT!
SPOCK, BE A HUMAN TONIGHT!
YOU'VE LEARNED TO SWEAR AND BE COMPASSIONATE TO CHEKOV.
NOW, BE A HUMAN TONIGHT!

STAND UP AND SHOW TO THE FEN
THEY'VE GOT THEIR BOY BACK AGAIN
THEY SAVED THE SHOW AND PUT DIRECTING IN YOUR CONTRACT
SPOCK, BE A HUMAN FOR THEM!

C'MON MY FRIEND, I KNOW YOU CAN DO IT.
I KNOW THAT YOU'RE A HUMAN TOO.
BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T THROW EDDIE MURPHY AT ME
WHEN I WAS DEPENDING ON YOU.

SO LET'S PUT AN END TO THIS PLAY
DROP THOSE TWO WHALES IN THE BAY.
DO SOMETHING SPOCK, YOU KNOW I GAVE YOU BACK YOUR MARBLES
SPOCK, BE A HUMAN TODAY!

ALL: SPOCK, BE A HUMAN TONIGHT!
SPOCK, BE A HUMAN TONIGHT!

MCCOY: SPOCK, IF YOU'VE EVER BEEN A HUMAN TO BEGIN WITH
SPOCK, BE A HUMAN --

ALL: GUESS WILLYA, GUESS WILLYA, WHATSA MATTER MAKE A GUESS!...

MCCOY: TODAY!

SPOCK: I shall endeavor to try.

MCCOY: Fat chance, you can't even pronounce it.

UHURA: Admiral, I'm picking up the whales.

KIRK: Transmit the coordinates to Scotty.

SCOTTY: (Voiceover) Standing by, Admiral.

KIRK: Beam up the whales, Mr. Scott!

SCOTTY: Ye want some water on the side, then?

KIRK: Just do it!

SCOTTY: THAR SHE BLOWS!!

KIRK: Spock, are we ready for time warp?

SPOCK: I guess. (*Shrugs*)

KIRK: Mr. Sulu?

SULU: Preparing for warp speed. On Mr. Spock's signal.

SPOCK: Hmmm... give it a shot.

(*Lights to Dark*)

GILLIAN: Wait! I forgot my purse!

KIRK: Women!

(*Lights to Full*)

Where are we?

MCCOY: More to the point, when are we?

(*Probe sounds. Lights to Dim*)

SULU: Power gone, Admiral.

CHEKOV: I think we're in a lot of trouble, Admiral!

(*Dive sounds. Loud Splash*)

SCOTTY: (*Voiceover*) Admiral! The beasties are trapped!

MCCOY: I guess we must be in the water!

KIRK: My lucky day, isn't it? All right -- ABANDON SHIP!

UHURA: You're kidding! Nobody says that anymore!

(*ALL exit stage left. KIRK exits stage right. Lights to Dark. Begin storm sounds. Dry ice for steam. Enter ALL but KIRK. Lights to Dim*)

SPOCK: (*To Scotty*) Where's Jeremiah?

SCOTTY: He stayed to rescue the whales. He should have been out by now!

SPOCK: Well, as your new captain --

GILLIAN: LOOK!

(*KIRK crawls on stage, followed by GEORGE and GRACIE*)

KIRK: (To WHALES) Say something, damnit!

WHALES: (Looking up) GO 'WAY!

(Lights to Full. Storm sounds die out)

KIRK: We made it! Scotty, the engines held!

SONG: "Wonder of Wonders" from Fiddler on the Roof

WONDER OF WONDERS, MIRACLE OF MIRACLES
SCOTTY HAS BROUGHT US THROUGH ONCE AGAIN

SULU: CHARGED THE DILITHIUM, MIRACLE OF MIRACLES
AND TOOK THIS SUCKER TO WARP TEN!

SCOTTY: WHEN I MUCKED UP THE TRANSWARP DRIVE
THAT WAS A MIRACLE
AND WHEN I FOOLED MUDD'S ANDROID HIVE
THAT WAS A MIRACLE, TOO!

BUT OF ALL MY MIRACLES LARGE AND WEE
BY FAR THE GREATEST ONE FOR ME
IS THAT USING JUST A BIRD OF PREY
I HAVE SAVED THE WHALES TODAY!

KIRK: (Speaks) Just a minute!

MCCOY: WONDER OF WONDERS, MIRACLE OF MIRACLES
WE'VE MADE IT BACK TO OUR OWN TIME!

GILLIAN: NOW THERE ARE WHALES HERE, MIRACLE OF MIRACLES
AND THE PROBE REPENTS ITS CRIME!

KIRK: (Speaks) Now, look!

SCOTTY: WHEN I BROUGHT THE DEFIANT BACK
THAT WAS A MIRACLE!
AND WHEN I BURNED APOLLO'S SHACK
THAT WAS A MIRACLE, TOO!

BUT OF ALL ME MIRACLES LARGE AND WEE
BY FAR THE GREATEST ONE FOR ME
IS THAT USING JUST A BIRD OF PREY --

(Break music. KIRK rushes forward)

KIRK: That's it!

(A scuffle ensues. MCCOY comes forward with hypo, injects KIRK,
who collapses. Music resumes)

SCOTTY: I HAVE SAVED THE WHALES TODAY!! (Exit ALL)

(ENTERPRISE bridge set. ALL enter and take stations as KIRK speaks. EXTRA is among them)

KIRK: *(Voiceover)* Captain's Log: Star Trek V, here we come! We've been given a new Enterprise and I've been demoted to Captain. I'm quite happy about this, except -- *(Enters, points to SPOCK)* How come he gets to be a captain, too?

(Enter SAREK)

Well, Ambassador, I suppose you're ready to beam down to Vulcan?

SAREK: I would like to speak to my son first.

(SPOCK and SAREK come forward, face each other)

SPOCK: Father, thank you for disposing of that overrated comedian.

SAREK: No thanks are necessary, Spock. He was stealing my scene. I must return to Vulcan now, and I would like to tell you...

SPOCK: Yes?

SAREK: *(Leans to whisper in SPOCK's ear. SPOCK promptly zips up his fly)* By the way, I've decided I approve of your Starfleet career. You may stay here.

SPOCK: I must admit that this is a relief after 35 years.

SAREK: Have you a message for your mother?

SPOCK: Yes, tell her... to get voice lessons.

SAREK: *(Salutes)* Live long and prosper, my son.

SPOCK: *(Salutes)* Ditto.

(Exit SAREK. EXTRA brings KIRK a clipboard to sign. He looks at EXTRA, recognizing him)

KIRK: Tell me something, you don't want to be a lumberjack, do you?

EXTRA: No, my life's ambition has always been to be a Starfleet officer.

KIRK: Good!

EXTRA: But now that you mention it, Starfleet could use some lumberjacks.

(ALL stand and advance)

No, no! Don't bother! I know! PROP!!!

(Prop Crew comes and drags off EXTRA)

KIRK: Is that about it?

GILLIAN: Except for the finale, buddy.

SONG: "Star Trek Tonight" to "Comedy Tonight" from A Funny Thing Happened...

WORDS omitted, due to Author's vacation in Rehobeth Beach.

(Ensemble on stage; wave to audience)

AUTHOR: That's all, folks!



Editor's Note ...

A WARNING TO ALL FANZINE BUYERS: There is an unethical practice being perpetrated in dealer rooms at Trek and media conventions. This is the buying and re-selling, at inflated prices, of zines currently in print and for sale by the original editor. Not only is this making money from someone else's labor, but it is exploiting the consumer who could purchase the same zine at a cost of sometimes half the price these "rip-off" dealers are charging. The dealer sends two or three unidentified "fen" to a zine table to buy a few copies from the editor supposedly for "himself and a few friends." Then these zines are marked up dramatically in price and re-sold, often at the same convention. When approached by the editors, the dealer refuses to stop this practice, claiming he can legally do this. Legally? Perhaps. Morally, ethically? Absolutely not! Beware if you see current zines being sold by someone other than the editor. Check to see if the dealer has permission to resell the zine and if the price is within line with most current zines. Some dealers do agent for editors, but their mark-up is no more than a dollar or two more than the original price of the zine to cover expenses. Check the publication date in the front of the zine. If it is within the past year, chances are the zine is still in print and can be bought from the editor or her agent at the original price. More zines are now printing price and publication date on the title page to forestall this practice. If you see a dealer who is selling inflated price zines, tell him or her that you object to this practice.

I must go down
to the seas again
to the lonely sea and the sky,
and all I ask is a tall ship
and a star to steer her by,
and the wheel's kick
and the wind's song,
and the white sails shaking,
and a gray mist
on the sea's face
and a gray dawn breaking.

John Masefield